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A SALUTE TO
MID-CENTURY
MODERN
ARCHITECTURE

BEHIND THE GATES
THE CANYONS
BIGHORN'S BRILLIANT
NEW RESTAURANT

ANNIKA
SORENSTAM
ON PALM DESERT, GOLF
AND HER FUTURE PLANS



DIAMOND STATUS BIGHORN OPENS ITS BRILLIANT CANYONS RESTAURANT



TEXT: HENRY FENWICK PHOTOS: ETHAN KAMINSKY

When one walks through the astonishing new Canyons restaurant in Bighorn, one question comes to mind. Why would an already enormously successful private golf club decide to open an ambitious new restaurant that competes in quality with the best public restaurants in the valley?

"It wasn't to make money," said Dennis Nighswonger, Bighorn's General Manager, wryly when I asked him. He doesn't think he has ever heard of any equivalent at any other golf club in the country. "Maybe in Scottsdale," he said dubiously. But he didn't think so.

Bighorn Chairman R.D. Hubbard has a track record of doing unprecedented things. When he opened the Spa at Bighorn in 2002 it was an equally out-of-the-box decision. Golf clubs didn't have such extraordinary spas then. But since that time other golf clubs have

followed suit and Bighorn sales have increased rapidly. All of its original 300 home sites, located on the Mountains course, have been sold, and only a few remain on the Canyons course.

Which rather reinforces the question – why such an ambitious restaurant when Bighorn is close to sold out? If it's a purely altruistic gesture on behalf of his Bighorn members, it is certainly a showy one. The restaurant itself, even in an unfinished state, looked spectacular when I toured it. The first thing to strike a visitor is the gigantic fireplace in the middle of the main dining room, constructed of stone and concrete with a copper finish. The second thing, so dazzling that you can't believe it wasn't the first thing, is that the whole place has extraordinary views across the course, to the mountains or over the valley, depending on where you're sitting. It's hard to say where

would be the best place to be seated: in the main dining room, in a banquette near that fireplace, on the patio with the breathtaking views, near an outdoor fire or maybe in the wine room with its high beamed ceilings and a vista from the table through the arches, across the dining room, and out to the air beyond.

TOP CUISINE, TOP CHEFS

The menu for the restaurant looks tantalizingly good too; Chef Victor La Placa comes from working as Corporate Executive Chef for Todd English Enterprises. Todd English is one of those celebrity chefs whose innovative cooking made him a major culinary star, and La Placa has a definite sense of adventure. He pairs pan-seared jumbo sea scallops with a lobster and sweet pea risotto, then to add spice and salt to that luxurious sweetness he garnishes it with a