This restaurant not only received rave reviews for the food but for the ambience as well. Philadelphians who remembered the 6,500 sq. ft. space with the almost 30 ft. high ceiling that was once tenanted by a brokerage house couldn't believe the change. Not only was Marguerite Rodgers able to tame the space, keep the original architecture and capitalize on the space's "grandness," she was also able to make it "warm, cozy and comfortable." The once intimidating dark wood, stenciled ceiling and marble columns became an essential part of the final design—"reminiscent of a grand hotel in a foreign land." One way of making the space less "intimidating" and also make use of the ceiling height was to separate the main dining area into two platform levels. Custom designed and manufactured millwork and furniture, coordinated with towering palm trees and the marble columns also helped. The platforms establish subtle changes in height and also make it possible for diners to see out through the windows which are partially covered with sweep back, unbleached muslin curtains. They add "a delicate sensual element, while intricately-patterned fabrics and carpets complement the colors—and features of the existing architecture."

DESIGN: Marguerite Rodgers, Ltd., Philadelphia, PA
ARCHITECT: W. Scott Winger
FISH SCULPTURE & SCONCES: Bob Phillips
PHOTOGRAPHY: Matt Wargo
As one Philadelphia food reviewer, Maria Gallagher, stated in the Philadelphia Daily News, "the marble pillars, the 30 ft. ceiling, colorful oriental rugs, potted palms and spectacular flower arrangements, put me in mind of a grand hotel." Chandeliers with custom pleated shades add to the soft, elegant look.

Starring in this food epic are the chefs in the open kitchen which becomes a dramatic stage setting. The exhibition kitchen is special.

It was inspired by traditional working kitchens with long center work tables. These tables are complemented by hutches, a pantry, stillrooms, and a scullery for wet food preparation. There is an in-kitchen, chef's table where guests experience the creative cooking process as "active participants in the theater-like design," a 16 ft. sculpture of a leaping striped bass, made of hand forged steel by Bob Phillips, turns a stainless kitchen hood and duct work into a piece of sculptural art.

"I try in my work to have a clear understanding of what society is wanting at the time of a project," says the designer, Marguerite Rodgers. Based on her own reactions to movies like "Casablanca" and "Indochine," she turned to Moorish wood furniture, rattan, terra cotta colored walls, earth tones for the paisley patterned fabrics and plants to create an exotic ambiance. She even disguise the unattractive rest room area with sepia toned drapes hanging from a chandelier in a tent-like manner, and this also added to the overall atmosphere of the restaurant.

Neil Stein and Joe Wolf are most satisfied to be the owners of this successful, hot, hot, "sexy" "in" 140 seat dining establishment.