



CREDIT: Bruno Schlumberger,
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Left to right, Christian Cocquiere,
maitre d'hotel; Mikael Joannides,
general manager; and Frederic
Filiodeau, executive chef.

An Ottawa restaurant is getting the first Five-Diamond Award in the city from the American Automobile Association/Canadian Automobile Association.

The 2006 award to Signatures restaurant at Le Cordon Bleu Paris Culinary Arts Institute in Sandy Hill will be announced at a reception for 160 guests on Monday. Only nine restaurants in Canada currently have the five-diamond rating.

"We're honoured to receive this prestigious recognition," says Le Cordon Bleu International president and owner,

Andre Cointreau, of the famous French liqueur family.

"It recognizes what we have been doing at Signatures over the past few years," says Mikael Joannides, general manager.

"It confirms Mr. Cointreau's commitment and faith in Ottawa as the hub for Le Cordon Bleu in North America."

The only other establishment with five AAA/CAA diamonds in the national capital area is Le Baccara restaurant at the Casino du Lac-Leamy.

Four-diamond CAA/AAA award winners in Ottawa last year included Perspectives restaurant at Brookstreet Resort, Beckta Dining & Wine and Le Jardin, which will retain their four-diamond classifications for 2006.

While a Four-Diamond Award goes to restaurants that offer distinguished fine dining, the Five-Diamond Award is reserved for restaurants that provide a "world-class" level of excellence in all aspects: cuisine, service and ambience.

It is especially a feather in the cap for Frederic Filliodeau, executive chef; Laurent Pages, pastry chef; and Christian Cocquiere, maitre d'hotel. Both Mr. Filliodeau and Mr. Pages have been at Signatures since it was opened in September 2001.

"It recognizes all facets of the experience and the teamwork," Mr. Filliodeau says. "Fine dining is like good theatre, where many aspects come together and you have good *savoir faire*."

Signatures joins such world-class culinary luminaries as Charlie Trotter's in Chicago, Le Cirque in the Bellagio in Las Vegas, Atelier in the Ritz-Carleton in New York City and The Belvedere in The Peninsula Beverly Hills, California.

Le Cordon Bleu is the only culinary school to operate a five-diamond restaurant, which provides students an opportunity to observe first-hand the high standards required to create world-class dining and service. Food preparation and service staff at Signatures operate separately from the school.

Each year, 65 CAA/AAA evaluators check almost 70,000 hotels and restaurants across North America. Of those, less than one-half of one per cent get the Five-Diamond Award, and only three per cent qualify for the Four-Diamond Award.

The CAA/AAA Five-Diamond Award for hotels and restaurants is North America's most coveted symbol of excellence in the hospitality industry. It is the only hotel and restaurant rating system that covers the entire United States and Canada as well as top destinations in Mexico and the Caribbean.

For 2005, only 85 hotels and 57 restaurants earned five-diamond status for impeccable "haute cuisine" and service. All dishes must be extraordinary, their presentations spectacular, the service and ambience flawless.

Since opening four years ago, Signatures has continuously won awards and recognition as one of Canada's Top 20 tables. It has maintained the highest three-star rating in *Where to Eat in Canada* for four consecutive years. And the school in Ottawa was recently named by food editors and restaurateurs as one of the Top 10 culinary academies in North America.

Le Cordon Bleu specializes in classic French cuisine with a modern interpretation. It is the kind of establishment where women place their purses on a footstool by the table, and prices on the menu are seen only by the person paying for the meal.

A typical dinner for two with a modest wine, taxes and tip costs about \$230.