

Remaining a Home

**An Interview with Erich Steinbock,
Managing Director, The Carlyle,
A Rosewood Hotel**

EDITORS' NOTE Erich Steinbock joined Rosewood Hotels & Resorts following 11 years with The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company. After joining the hotel group as Food & Beverage Director at The Ritz-Carlton, Laguna Niguel, Steinbock became General Manager of several properties within the collection and spearheaded the opening of 14 Ritz-Carltons, both domestically and internationally. Steinbock also served as Vice President of Food & Beverage at the Ritz-Carlton corporate office.

Most recently, he served as General Manager of The Ritz-Carlton, St. Louis. Steinbock began his career as a waiter's apprentice in Vienna. He earned his M.B.A. from City University of Seattle in Vienna.

PROPERTY BRIEF The Carlyle has been a fixture on Manhattan's Upper East Side since its completion in 1930. The legendary 35-story hotel (www.thecarlyle.com) boasts 188 individually appointed rooms and suites – some with grand pianos, private terraces, and Central Park views – and has been called home by leaders in world affairs, business, society, and entertainment. The property is home to the popular Café Carlyle and Bemelmans Bar, and is managed by Dallas-based Rosewood Hotels & Resorts.

When you were presented with the opportunity to come to The Carlyle, what made you feel it was the right fit, and what excited you about it?

There are few truly iconic hotel properties in the world that don't imitate anybody else, that have set trends, and that have a certain history and culture embedded within them, and one of those few happens to be The Carlyle. Having been in the hotel industry for over 40 years, I feel like I have passed the Olympic trials and I'm now on the Olympic team, but the work has just begun.

Are you happy with where the product is today, and do you foresee any major renovations?

We already had some major renovations and what has come out in our suites and our top-rated rooms is absolutely magnificent. There are ongoing renovations being done, but we have to be careful not to take out the soul of the place. The Carlyle is the quintessential Upper



Erich Steinbock



East Side New York home, and shall always remain a home and not necessarily a hotel. There are some little quirks here that you might not be able to find at other places and the patina of the place has to be preserved while providing the modern conveniences the guests are looking for.

Is your role more complex in leading a property that has a residential component?

Our residents are our guests as much as people staying, but they stay a little longer – like 20 years. They're

playing a very active role in the hotel, and what is wonderful about The Carlyle is there are people that understand their roles. The guests understand their roles, the residents understand their roles, the employees understand their roles – we're all part of the same team.

In a market like New York City, where you have great restaurants on every block, how challenging is it for a hotel to be successful in the food and beverage part of the business?

Our food and beverage experience is different from other hotels. Bemelmans Bar is adorned by the murals painted by Ludwig Bemelman, which is how he earned his keep, and it's where we offer great live jazz entertainment seven nights a week. Beyond that is Café Carlyle with artists like Judy Collins, Elaine Stritch, and Steve Tyrell. Café Carlyle is full just about every night. So between the two, we have substantial traffic into our food and beverage operation. To complement our excellent Executive Chef, the hotel has a beautiful dining room and we also take care of more room service than some other properties because we are also delivering to the large suites, the apartments, as well as to the meeting experiences that happen during the course of the day.

Do you need to offer a true spa experience today for the luxury guest, or in a market like New York, is that less essential?

Our spa, which has won several awards, is doing very well. We haven't done enough research to say that people come and stay because of the spa, but I wonder how many people would not stay because there was not a spa. Sometimes, even if people don't use it, it's the idea that it's there, just in case. We have a wonderful fitness center with some



great trainers, so the combination of the Senses Spa and Yves Durif's salon make a huge difference.

In terms of the economic downturn, do you see business coming back today, and has there been a pick up as you look to where we are on the road to recovery?

We've seen big recovery presently. Almost daily, the bookings are much more short-term than they used to be – that's why we're surprised. September through December of 2009 was very good. For our hotel, it's hard to predict because we don't have much group business. We are a hotel of mostly individual travelers with valuable time, so the booking cycle tends to be shorter anyway. Now even within the shorter booking cycle, our cycle has been shorter. So it's very hard for us, but the trends right now look really good.

With today's technology, including the cell phones and BlackBerrys, is it ever possible to really turn off the business in this industry?

For me, it's a lifestyle – my work life and my private life flow into one. Some people think that's a sign of a workaholic, but for me, it's not. I talk shop with my children, they talk shop with me. That doesn't mean we don't go out and have fun, but it's a lifestyle, so the BlackBerry and the computer are necessary evils. I try to stay away from them as much as I can. When I walk through the hotel, I don't take my cell phone or BlackBerry with me so I'm not even tempted to look at it. I try to get on the computer in the morning and the evening. We have to be careful because somebody told me once that with the invention of the washing machine, the housewives spend more time doing laundry than before. With the invention of all this technology, I don't want to spend more time in the office. ●

Café Carlyle (left); The Carlyle tower from Central Park (right)