

The Chase

Words by: Erinn Waldo



For its flagship restaurant, Chase Hospitality Group wanted to establish a brand that stood out from the crowd. “If you come to the Chase, it will be a unique experience in Toronto,” explains Gianpiero Pugliese, principal of locally based [Audax Architecture](#). Taking into account its affluent neighborhood wanting to break from the repeated industrial aesthetic found in many of the city’s restaurants, the Chase—set in the newly built top floor of a heritage building downtown—puts a modern spin on classic, elegant dining.

“We wanted to bring the dining experience back to a time and place where service and elegance and the luxurious sort of experience was a part of the atmosphere,” says Pugliese. Inspired by upscale residences, the restaurant’s floorplan and detailing take after an elegant city home.

While the space is essentially one room, it is subdivided into a cloakroom, a bar area with a library, a kitchen and wine room, and a formal dining room.

Different design elements signify the transition between spaces. The flooring moves from marble to hardwood to carpet, and the ceiling details vary in each zone. “We wanted to create this intimacy so you’re not in this vacuous room, but each zone kind of creates a different mood,” Pugliese adds. The furniture, millwork, and the bar also help divide the space.

The key element of the restaurant is the white palette that covers the walls, columns, and trim, along with an ornamented ceiling and molding to emulate the look of a home. Elegant stone, like Cararra marble and a honed chocolate limestone, are layered in, and glass and mirror elements help open the tighter corners of the space. “For the furniture, we looked at various fabrics to dress the banquettes, chairs, and barstools—each one creating a different mood in each zone,” says Pugliese. The maroon velvet banquettes in the wine room contrast with those in the dining room, which are light and linen furnished, including one modeled after a Chesterfield sofa.

Different metals throughout the space include polished nickel, which covers most of the trim and the bar. Various decorative light fixtures alter the mood, ranging from traditional lamp pendants in the foyer to crystal light fixtures in the dining room. “While we’re using more

traditional elements in the space, it still feels very crisp and modern,” Pugliese points out. “That was important, because we didn’t want to create a stuffy, traditional environment. We wanted to create a fresh lightness that you would find in a modern space that also has some of the comfort that you would have in a more traditional space.”

This comfortable modernity is reflected in the menu and the restaurant brand itself. “The Chase has a casual elegance to it, and the food is similar in that respect,” he explains. “It’s not a uptight presentation— it’s elegant, but not stuffy.” The brand, perhaps suggesting the chase for big dreams in Toronto, has already expanded to include Collette, a French bistro with a similarly luxurious, yet comfortable aesthetic.

“We really tried to pull together as many images from different parts to create something from scratch that’s new and original,” says Pugliese. “I haven’t seen a restaurant or space like that before. That’s our intent—we didn’t want to mimic; we want to be original.”