

**St. Joseph's Day, International House Style**  
*Annual altar enlivens a brand new lobby*

International House, New Orleans. The most progressive boutique hotel in America's boutique city has always been distinguished by its clear sense of time and place. The time is purely contemporary. The place is a city whose cultural richness the hotel interprets in a thoroughly modern way – from the candlelit Voodoo ambiance of its world-class bar, to the Basque-influence of Rambla, its restaurant, to the observation of little-known local rituals and customs throughout the year. Saint Joseph's Day, St. John's Day – even Louis Armstrong's birthday – receive stylish treatment in its captivating lobby.

It's about to get another shot of color, as well, as International House prepares for St. Joseph's Day, a cherished celebration among New Orleans' Italian citizens, on March 19, 2009. According to legend, St. Joseph and the humble fava bean saved Sicily from a dire famine in the Middle Ages. In thanksgiving, grateful Sicilians have made offerings of food to the saint on his feast day ever since. Just as in the homes and churches of the New Orleans' extensive Sicilian community, the hotel's lobby will be home to a monumental 'edible' altar.

At International House, this fanciful interpretation of local artisanal Italian delicacies is one of the many customs that give the premier boutique hotel its distinctly unique character. It is the work of Linda Sampson, a local designer and stylist, who this year will be constructing it in 360-degrees, dominated on one side by a large statue of St. Joseph, and on the other, by an image of the saint by local artist Kelly Magee, painted on wood that survived Katrina. These central elements are surrounded by a plentitude of palm fronds and platters of wheat stalks, dry pasta, nuts, and, of course, fava beans, as well as breads in the shape of a large cross, an alligator, and a wreath; a cake in the shape of a lamb, various pastries, edible marzipan "topiaries," Italian fig cookies, candies, and kumquats. Each dish comes with its own prayer and a quiet offering of gratitude. The floral decoration of the International House altar is just as stunning as the food – and worth a closer look: Sampson has crafted the symbolic red St. Joseph's Lilies entirely from tiny beads, providing a sustainable set of blooms for the annual display.

This elaborate construction will grace the International House lobby from **March 11-26** this year, bringing visitors and guests a glimpse of one of New Orleans' beloved local rituals. It endows the stunning new public space of International House with all the marvelous color, texture, craftsmanship, and mystery of this colorful tradition – and a touch of the miraculous to all who enter.

That lobby has recently been given an opulent redesign by the bold and insightful LM Pagano, whose private clients include Johnny Depp and Nicolas Cage. Her vision of lobby as sanctuary overlaps simmering tones of carnelian and tiger's eye with textural elements of iron and fire, velvet and leather, and marble and wood, punctuated by accents that embrace the city's European, African, and Caribbean heritage.

International House is a member of K-Hotels Worldwide Collection of Distinct Boutique Hotels.

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