



**DISH**



News, Tips, and Inside Information from the Dining Editors of *Chicago* magazine  
by Penny Pollack & Jeff Ruby

## A Conversation with Jason McLeod

The 38-year-old native of Vancouver Island, Canada, will be the exec chef at **Elysian (11 E. Walton St.)** when the hotel opens in July, which is a long way from his first job, as a dishwasher at a Canadian pancake house. His pastry chef, by the way, will be **Mindy Segal (HotChocolate)**.

**D:** What path did you take to end up here?

**JM:** I would love to say I grew up on the farm and loved to cook, but that's not true. But I was lucky to pick it up quickly. I did a three-year program in Canada, then made contact with **Raymond Blanc**, a two-Michelin-star chef in England, who was opening **Le Petit Blanc** in Oxford. I ended up spending almost five years there. Then I worked for **Marco Pierre White**.

**D:** So how did you make this connection with Elysian?

**JM:** Moved back to Canada, joined the Four Seasons Hotel chain. About seven years with them, involved with about five properties. One of my food and beverage directors contacted me about the job at the Elysian.

**D:** What's your vision for Elysian?

**JM:** It's a collaboration. Especially with Mindy Segal coming on board. We want to take out the feel of a hotel restaurant. With my luxury hotel background and Mindy's understanding of the local business, we will bring this great vision forward.

**D:** Which is?

**JM:** We want to be that comfort zone for the locals, for Chicagoans to come to the restaurant and feel it's an extension of their home, not a hotel.

**D:** Have you begun developing the menu?

**JM:** I'm still meeting farmers, suppliers. Will take some time to put some dishes together. I'm working at HotChocolate because we don't have access to a kitchen here yet. **David Pisor** [Elysian's CEO] really understands what it's going to take to be successful. He worked at **Chez Panisse** with **Alice Waters** for six years. She is his aunt. He has an unbelievable passion for food.