

# Dallas' Ritz-Carlton ranked No. 1 large hotel in Zagat guide

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The Zagat travel guide named the Ritz Carlton Dallas the No. 1 large hotel in the U.S. and its Fearing's restaurant No. 1 in hotel dining.

In its 2009 Top U.S. Hotels, Resorts & Spas survey released Wednesday, Zagat gives the Uptown hotel extraordinary to perfect ratings in each category. Travelers described the food served by celebrity chef Dean Fearing as "last-meal worthy."

The ranking gives the Ritz a morale boost – and potentially a financial one as well – as luxury hotels prepare for a challenging holiday season.

"The luxury part of the hotel industry is feeling the highest impact" of the economic downturn, said Hank Wolpert, managing director at consulting firm PKF Capital.

He said not only are companies cutting back on travel, but they're sensitive to the appearance that they're enjoying luxury accommodations while many consumers are struggling to stay afloat.

The Zagat ranking, based on input from more than 14,000 frequent travelers, meeting planners and travel agents, offers the Ritz and Mr. Fearing several tangible benefits, Mr. Wolpert said.

Besides bragging rights for management and staff, the ranking is likely to be highly publicized, which can translate into increased sales.

"Consumers identify with success, and consumers will go out of their way to patronize hotels and restaurants where their success has been noted," Mr. Wolpert said.

General manager Roberto van Geenen agreed.

Given the number of hotels surveyed (1,001), "to be able to stand out of that group will definitely result in an improvement in business," he said.

The 218-room Ritz Carlton opened in August 2007.

"This is extraordinary recognition to be given in such a short period of time," Mr. van Geenen said.