

THIS WEEK'S DEALS
CLICK ANY LOGO TO BEGIN SHOPPING

WOOD GM	MAHWAH HONDA	LIBERTY HYUNDAI	PRESTIGE LAND ROVER

HOME LOG IN REGISTER E-MAIL ALERTS RSS MOBILE SUBSCRIBE

PLACE AN AD CLASSIFIEDS LEGALS FOR

NorthJersey.com

 Archive

NEWS OBITUARIES SPORTS HEALTH REAL ESTATE ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT FOOD & DINING COMMUNITY MORE

High School All Pro Pro Football Pro Baseball Pro Hockey Pro Basketball Other Pro Golf Bob Klapisc Rec & Travel

WYCKOFF DESIGN REVIEW OF SHOPRITE PLANS TONIGHT, JAN. 11 TEEN SERIOUS! Embed

Home : Wire

North Jersey has been a bastion of classical French cooking

Tuesday, December 22, 2009

BY AMY KUPERINSKY
THE RECORD
SPECIAL TO THE RECORD

0 Comments

A maître d’hotel turning his nose up at your request for a table. A scant few morsels of nouvelle cuisine as filling as a crouton. And, of course, the thud of a few elemental ingredients: butter, cream, and sweetbreads.



CHRIS PEDOTA/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

[Buy this photo](#)

Bergen County’s old-school French chefs: Hans Egg of The Saddle River Inn, Gaspard Caloz of Madeleine’s Petit Paris in Northvale and Claude

Despite these enduring stereotypes about French and continental cuisine and its disappearance from the Manhattan restaurant scene, you’ll still find old-school chefs serving the chateaubriands, escargots and coq au vin they’ve made their entire careers, even as they — and many of their customers — speed past retirement age.

“There’s not too many French restaurants anymore,” said Claude Baills, 66, chef-owner at Chef’s Table in Franklin Lakes and one in a trio of Bergen County chefs who were born and trained in Europe, immigrated to the United States, became giants in the Manhattan restaurant scene and chose to spend the peak of their careers in Bergen County.

At 67, Hans Egg of the Saddle River Inn is the group’s

Baills of The Chef's Table in Franklin Lakes.

the county's most acclaimed restaurants. The youngster is Gaspard Caloz, 62, the onetime executive chef at Manhattan's Tavern on the Green, who has spent the last two decades at Chez Madeleine in Bergenfield and Madeleine's Petit Paris in Northvale — both restaurants named for his wife, who runs the dining room.

A loyal following

Three classic chefs

Claude Baills

Restaurant: The Chef's Table, Franklin Lakes

Age: 66

European background: Born in Perpignan, in the south of France. Trained in hotels and luxury liners and served as a personal chef to an army general.

Past jobs: Chef at the Four Seasons, Laurent Restaurant and the Palace in Manhattan, chef-owner of Claude's in Manhattan and Claude's Ho-Ho-Kus Inn.

On French cuisine: "People still get scared," said Baills, namely of butter and cream. "French is too heavy, too rich," they say. I wouldn't call it heavy," he said. Instead of flour, he uses veal stock and arrowroot to thicken sauces. "If the sauces are too thick, they're no good. If they're too thin, they're no good," he said. "It's like a glass of wine, your mouth feels the flavor of what you're eating there. If it's an orange

elder statesman. Born in Switzerland, he once was the chef-owner of D ezaley in Manhattan, but next year will be his 30th presiding over the Saddle River Inn, one of

"Once we lose these great French chefs, no one can replace them," said Michael Latour, 46, chef-owner at Latour in Ridgewood.

Their restaurants have continued to thrive in this era of fusion and sushi bars because of customer loyalty. At The Chef's Table, which Baills opened 10 years ago after being chef at Manhattan's Four Seasons and the Palace Restaurant and a decade at the Ho-Ho-Kus Inn, customers often sit in the same seat and order the same dishes on each visit — such as rack of lamb in puff pastry, Baills' specialty, or vichyssoise, a chilled leek-onion soup — and even take ownership of the menu, which he hesitates to change. They get upset when duck   l'orange is presented with raspberry sauce, or they'll ask for steak tartare when they make their reservation, he said.

"People come here and they say to us, 'We love to bring people in because you never disappoint.' ... They know we have the rack of lamb, the steak au poivre, the calf's liver," Caloz said.

Egg maintains customer favorites like the chateaubriand — beef tenderloin for two — served with a potato roesti, and he'll occasionally cook sweetbreads or kidneys, but lately, he says, he's been a bit more progressive, being deliberate about seeking out natural and organic ingredients and cutting out cream sauces. "When I started off the '60s, we never heard the word 'cholesterol,'" he said.

Maurice Pailleret, the president of the New Jersey chapter of the Soci t  Culinaire Philanthropique, an association of French chefs founded in 1865, said French classics won't disappear completely, but they may be lumped into a more general Continental designation.

"Any food you do is based on French technique," he said,

sauce, it's an orange sauce — you don't have to think about it too much.”

* * *

Gaspard Caloz

Restaurant: Madeleine's Petit Paris, Northvale

Age: 62

European background: Born in Miège, Switzerland. Started out as a chef at hotels in Zurich, St. Moritz, Davos and Lugano.

Past jobs: Chef in St. Martin, where he cooked for Sidney Poitier, and at the Downingtown Inn in Pennsylvania, overseen by Mickey Rooney. Executive chef at Tavern on the Green and corporate chef at the St. Regis Sheraton in Manhattan. Chef-owner of Chez Madeleine in Bergenfield.

Thoughts on French

cuisine: “About 40 years ago, except some nice restaurants in New York, there were only a few really good French restaurants,” says Caloz. “People weren't used to the palate of French cuisine, like sweetbreads. Today, American people have very good palates, they know what they like and they know what they don't like.”

* * *

Hans Egg

Restaurant: The Saddle River Inn

especially pointing to French food when “fused” with Japanese cuisine. Caloz, agreed, noting that sauces have their roots in French technique, whether those built from demi-glaces, hollandaise or even mayonnaise. “The classic will never die. If you don't know the classic, then you can't cook,” Caloz said.

New love for classics

Not everyone believes French fusion is the future of French food, though. “To me, that's passé already,” Latour said. “To me it's going back toward classical preparations.”

“I think there's always going to be great French cuisine, bistros, brasseries, but maybe not as many because everyone's on fusion. It's what's all over TV, what seems to be popular,” says Denis Whitton, chef-owner at Harvest Bistro & Bar in Closter, who worked with Caloz at Chez Madeleine 19 years ago as a sous chef. He's noted an increase in women ordering game dishes, including pheasant, duck, elk and buffalo according to classic preparations.

“I try to cook with a lot less butter and cream, but let me tell you one thing, when you put a beurre blanc on the menu, that goes well,” says Bernard Vard, 55, chef-owner at Pourquois Pas Gourmand, a French bistro in Westwood. “People love that stuff. And that is butter and cream.”

Since the recent Julia Child movie, “Julie and Julia,” some have sought to revisit French classics at the chefs' restaurants, or taste them for the first time. “I never could sell boeuf bourguignon,” Egg said. “That was 20, 30 years ago, and now suddenly this boeuf bourguignon, you can sell that again.”

And Baills was amused when requests for lobster Thermidor increased.

“I've been doing that for so many years,” he said. “It's still a big seller here.”

Age: 67



European background:

From the German-speaking region of Switzerland, near Zurich. Started as a chef at a hotel in St. Moritz.

Past jobs: Chef at the Swiss Pavilion at the World's Fair in Canada and chef-owner of Dézaley in Manhattan, named for a region of Switzerland near Lake Geneva famous for its white wine.

Thoughts on French

cuisine: Sometimes he peruses menus of restaurants in France online. "Every one of them has a sweetbread dish or squab," he says. "That's a hard sell here. Pheasant, the real gamey dishes, you cannot sell that here. I took a vacation in France in the fall and I couldn't eat that stuff anymore."

What are these?

More news from: Closter, Franklin Lakes, Northvale, Ridgewood, Saddle River, Westwood,

There are no current comments at this time. Be the first to post one!

Share your view:

Ads from Google

