

## **Brunch in Bloom at georges'**

By Susan I. Shiber

Guests entering one of Main Line Philadelphia's most popular restaurants are taken by the large black and white photo of Georges Perrier. They know at once his signature style and perfectionist spirit will follow them from first sips of fine wine through delectable desserts.

The staff at georges' feels the same way about Perrier's influence. His impact is tantamount to an invisible aura that guides them to impeccable service and flawlessly prepared food. Led by executive chef Joe Frost and Scott Thomas, general manager, georges' offers all that patrons expect and more.

Frost fine tunes menus with the skill of a musician who is dedicated to each note and nuance. From casual lounge dining to elaborate wine dinners, he cooks, supervises and presents with determined dedication. When Frost sees someone ready for more authority, he graciously passes the toque. An example is Chris Siropaides, who heads up banquets and brunch. "He does such a great job," says Frost, "it was an easy decision and Chris is very comfortable with responsibility."

Siropaides first experienced the Perrier touch at Central Montgomery Technical School. "We were blessed with incredible instructors," notes the young chef, "One worked at Le Bec Fin. I went to the restaurant for a day to trail him and see the operation. Here I am a kid dicing apples and in walks Georges Perrier. I was so nervous and prayed he wouldn't yell at me. It was a memorable experience."

Siropaides went on to graduate from Culinary Institute of America. He worked at Philadelphia Country Club and then spent a short stint at Perrier's Brasserie before joining georges'. "We strive for perfection because of Perrier. That's why we work here. We want to be the best."

Thomas concurs. The experienced restaurateur opened a McCormick & Schmick's in Hackensack, New Jersey, and relocated to launch another one in Philadelphia. A Seattle native, he spent 13 years at New York's famed Russian Tea Room and is proud to be at georges'. "At the Russian Tea Room, service is paramount and it's nice to be in an environment where attention is emphasized. We follow the plural premise to be engaging, serve superior food, offer extraordinary service, and yet never be snobbish."

I recently experienced this care and culinary excellence at brunch. I love brunch and, in my opinion, georges' is unsurpassed for variety, quality, taste and value. Food displays, particularly the in-house baked breads and pastry, resemble still life paintings. Buffet items are frequently replenished and servers remain close at hand. Amy, my waitress, was a fount of knowledge, answering all my questions with aplomb and confirming details

with the chef. She removed used plates at once, replaced silver and, most important, kept my coffee cup brimming.

The extensive menu featured eggs Benedict, made-from-scratch buttermilk pancakes, bacon, Italian sausage and an omelet/pasta station. Croissants, brioche, mini muffins and caramelized onion and cheddar cheese home fries complemented breakfast choices. For those preferring lunch or dinner, there was steamed salmon, chicken breast or prime rib au jus with an array of vegetables, including baby bok choy, broccoli rabe, pomme puree and Israeli cous cous. Assorted cheeses and salads were fresh and flavorful. An assortment of homemade tiny tarts, mini-madeleines, little jars of croissant bread pudding and cassis sorbet could not be ignored, despite full stomachs.

I tried almost everything and can report with candor that joy prevailed with each bite. Eggs Benedict and prime rib stood out, mainly because I usually find these selections less than satisfactory at brunch venues. The eggs were warm and jiggly soft, the beef juicy rare. Siropaides told me why.

“I poach the eggs underdone, then give them an ice water shock. After muffins are toasted and capped with ham, I drop on the eggs. If they’re overdone, I throw them out and poach again. As for beef, I start it at 300 degrees, continue roasting until it reaches 105 on a meat thermometer and take it out of the oven. If someone wants a well-done slice, I do it to order in the kitchen.”

Siropaides arrives in the wee hours of the morning to begin brunch. He blanches vegetables the night before to guarantee bright color and crispiness when served. “If you’re going to make something, make it the best people ever had. That’s what’s exhilarating for me.”

In addition to wonderful brunches, lunch, dinner and bar snacks, diners can look forward to an expanded garden room. According to Thomas, the sunny space will seamlessly lead to a renovated covered patio. “Guests can dine there year ‘round and book special events any time. We’re adding a full bar and plan to bring in larger tables. It will be beautiful and georges’ is open during construction.”

That’s good news for me, the brunch fan. I hate to admit to gluttony, but I went back for a second helping of freshly made sorbet. The deep current cassis was a rich, surprisingly creamy conclusion to a scrumptious bounty. All I can say is, for a Sunday that blossoms with contented satiety, nothing tops georges’.

**georges’**

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