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Chef Chevalier's Choice

By Susie Iventosch



Chef Philippe Chevalier of Chevalier Restaurant in Lafayette Photo Susie Iventosch

Not many kids start their careers by the age of 14, but this was the case for Philippe Chevalier, chef/owner of Chevalier Restaurant in Lafayette. Perhaps it was the influence of his grandmother, Marcelle Chevalier, who was a Cordon Bleu award-winning chef, but Chevalier says he was absolutely certain of his career path by the time he was barely a teenager.

So his parents packed him up and shipped him off to cooking school near Nantes, France, for the next three years. There, students divided their time between culinary school courses and on-the-job training, spending two weeks each month at school and two weeks working at a restaurant. At five to six days per week, this training was not for the casual cook.

Upon graduation, Chevalier moved to Paris where he honed his skills at several Michelin-rated establishments, achieving the post of Executive Chef at age 27. The following year, the owner of a famous Parisian dining establishment-Restaurant Olympe, urged Chevalier to enter "Un des Meilleurs Ouvriers de France," a highly-celebrated, skilled craftsman competition held every four years. The competition is open to a wide range of specialty trades, from

chocolate making and pastry baking to cabinetry and window-making. Literally, the name translates to "one of the best workers of France," and only the very best craftsmen in each field compete.

The competition, which was founded in 1924 and continues today, requires a significant commitment just to participate, as it takes several months to complete the process and to perfect a masterful showpiece. Because the competition is judged upon a strict set of standards, there may be multiple winners in any given year, or none. Winners carry the distinguished title for the rest of their lives.

Though Chevalier did not garner the title, competing against 500 other contestants served him well, and he felt it a major accomplishment just to have earned the chance to compete. The strenuous process included passing several written tests as well as practical measures, in addition to training under yet another Parisian chef on his days off.

Eventually, his career brought him to the United States, where he worked in San Francisco at Chez Papa and Cafe Claude, La Salamandre in Danville, and as a private chef in Marin County, before establishing Chevalier in July of 2008.

"I believe in the American dream," he said. "This country has given me what I wanted-the opportunity to have my own restaurant, and the possibility to meet the best wife in the world I could find, who has given me two beautiful kids I am so proud of."

Chevalier lives in Orinda with his wife Gretchen and his two children, Eva Josephine, 19 months, and Johnathan Henri, five months.

"I am very proud to be in Lafayette and thank my regular customers for their continued patronage," he said.

Chevalier hopes to make his kitchen, your kitchen.

"Since entering this field at 14, I have never looked back," he mused. "I really enjoy making people happy by sharing my knowledge and love of cooking. I hope my restaurant guests understand that the typical classic French cuisine we prepare here is not just for special occasions. This is 'typique'-how we regularly eat in France!"

Chevalier Restaurant

960 Moraga Road, Lafayette, CA. 94549, (925) 385-0793

Chevalier is a "Bib Gourmand" award winner in the 2010 Michelin Guide for San Francisco Bay Area & Wine Country Restaurants.

For more information about the restaurant, to view menus, or to watch Chef Philippe Chevalier in action on ABC's View By the Bay, please visit: <http://www.chevalierrestaurant.com/home.html>.



The garden patio is a delightful spot for outdoor dining, whether in the broad daylight or on a warm summer evening. Photo Susie Iventosch

Black Angus Beef Tenderloin Rossini

By Susie Iventosch



A Chevalier masterpiece: Black Angus Beef Tenderloin Rossini, with French green beans fagot, ratatouille, and mushroom duxelles

Black Angus Beef Tenderloin Rossini

Chef Chevalier was kind enough to share this delicious beef dish with us. I am not going to say it is quick and easy, but it is amazing. He likes to serve it with Mushroom duxelles on a toasted slice of brioche, fingerling potatoes, French green beans fagot, and ratatouille. I was lucky enough to taste his pommes Dauphine (crisp potato puffs) the day I visited Chevalier, and though we don't have that recipe, they, alone, are worth a visit to the restaurant!

Ingredients (Serves 4)

- 4 beef tenderloins, 10-oz each
- 4 oz. Cognac
- 4 oz. Port
- 8 oz. foie gras confit
- 4 slices brioche, cut in circle form and toasted
- 1 shallot
- 8 oz. white mushroom duxelles (finely chopped)
- 4 tablespoons chopped Italian parsley
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh garlic
- 2 tablespoons truffle oil
- 4 tablespoons canola oil
- 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 2 teaspoons chopped black truffle
- 2 tablespoons butter, salted
- 4 slices bacon
- 1/2 lb. green beans
- 1 lb. fingerling potatoes
- 1 bunch rosemary
- 1 jumbo yellow onion

1 red bell pepper
1 green bell pepper
2 zucchini
1 medium eggplant
4 Roma tomatoes
1 cup brown veal stock
salt, pepper

garniture: Pan seared fingerling potatoes, French green bean fagot, ratatouille

Directions

Mushroom Duxelle

In a pan over medium high heat 2 tablespoons canola oil, 1 tablespoon butter, 1/2 teaspoon chopped garlic, 1 teaspoon chopped shallots, 1/2 teaspoon fresh thyme, 8-oz finely chopped mushrooms. Cook over medium heat until mixture reaches consistency of compote or applesauce. Reserve.

Fingerling Potatoes

1 lb. fingerling potatoes cut in half inch circles. Pan sear over medium high heat with 1 tablespoon butter, 2 tablespoons oil, salt to taste. Cook 15 minutes until browned. Add 1 teaspoon fresh Italian chopped parsley. Reserve.

French green bean fagot

Clean green beans, cook 5 minutes in boiling water. Drain. Immediately submerge in ice water to preserve color. Assemble in stacks, like little woodpiles, wrap in 1 slice bacon per serving. Place in oven safe frying pan and roast in 380-degree oven for 5 minutes, just to cook bacon to crisp. Reserve.

Ratatouille

In deep saucepan heat 3 tablespoons olive oil over medium heat, 1 teaspoon chopped garlic, 1/2 teaspoon chopped rosemary, 1/2 jumbo yellow onion finely chopped, cook for 3 minutes stirring constantly. Add 1/2 red bell pepper cubed, 1/2 green bell pepper cubed, cook 5 minutes stirring constantly. Add 2 zucchini, cubed, cook 5 minutes stirring constantly. Add 1 eggplant, peeled and cubed, cook 5 minutes stirring constantly. Add 4 Roma tomatoes, cubed, cook for 10 minutes stirring constantly. Salt and pepper to taste. Reserve.

Beef Tenderloin:

Salt and pepper both sides, pan sear over high heat in 2 tablespoons canola oil. Recommended temperature, medium rare, 8 minutes each side. Remove from pan, reserve. Remove grease from pan, flambe with 4 oz cognac, deglaze with 4 oz port wine, cook for 1 minute. Over high heat add 1-cup brown veal stock. Reduce until consistency to coat back of spoon. Add chopped truffle, salt and pepper to taste, add 1 tablespoon butter to finish sauce. Reserve.

Plating:

Place toasted brioche in middle of plate, spoon mushroom mixture and top with beef tenderloin. Set up garniture of potatoes, green beans and ratatouille around beef in center. Place 1 slice foie gras on top of beef, finish with reduction sauce. Add chopped fresh Italian parsley before serving.

Bon Appetit!

Chef Chevalier recommends a nice Bordeaux , Medoc or St. Emilion pairing.

Reach the reporter at: suziven@gmail.com

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