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Business

Rêve Bistro: An Oasis Of Culinary Excellence In Lamorinda

By Sophie Braccini



Paul and Laura Magu in their new Lafayette restaurant, Rêve Bistro

Photo Sophie Braccini

What makes a good casual neighborhood bistro in France, aside from the checkered tablecloth instead of a white one, is excellent quality food at an every day price. This is the spirit of Rêve Bistro in Lafayette, recently opened by Paul Magu – a rigorous and ambitious 5-star chef. Magu was trained both in

France and in the United States, climbing the ladder of culinary responsibilities. Coming from the Ritz Carlton and St. Regis hotels in San Francisco, he could have chosen to open a very pricey spot. Instead, Magu opted to fulfill his dream (Rêve in French) of creating a neighborhood bistro where locals can flock a few times a week.

Magu decided in his teens that cooking was to be his life – not the most obvious choice for a diplomat's son. Magu's taste was formed in the French kitchen where his mother prepared dishes for receptions. At age 18 he decided to go the technical school route and started years of training, part-time in school, part-time in professional kitchens. Magu trained at the Ferrandi culinary school and his second internship was at The Lido, one of the largest cabarets in Paris, with a kitchen of 38 people. "I was blown away," remembered Magu. "It is such an organization, running like clockwork." After he got his degree, Magu was selected by his school to compete for the Meilleur ouvrier de France (best worker competition) and got second prize. This distinction allowed him to get a job at Gérard Besson's, a two Michelin star restaurant.

"This is where I learned the most about cooking and about discipline," said Magu. For the chef, cooking is an art, but one that requires rigor and scrupulous attention to quality at all stages of the cooking process, from the selection of the ingredients to the way clients are served at the table.

At Gérard Besson's, Magu learned a lot about game and winter vegetables. "I love this season," he said. "I enjoy everything – the specific sauces, the venison, the mushrooms." Magu then moved up the hierarchy and went to work at Paul Ducasse's restaurant. "In every

restaurant I worked I learned something different," he said. "With Ducasse, I learned the respect of the product, not overpowering it with seasoning, just adding enough to magnify without hiding."

In 1998 a friend of his parents who lived in Houston, Texas told Magu about the best French restaurant there, La Colombe d'Or, and of their need for a new chef. Magu did not hesitate, and headed to Texas with an 18-month visa in his pocket. "I loved it there," he said. During that time, a New York chef who was going to take over the Ritz Carlton in San Francisco stopped at La Colombe d'Or and asked Magu to join his team.

Magu joined the Ritz in 2000, first as dining room sous chef, then chef of the banquet department. "Then I moved to the St. Regis where I stayed until 2015," said Magu. He always thought that one day he would have his own place. While working at the Ritz he met Laura, who was in charge of hospitality. "To me she was the most professional," he said. Laura Magu now manages the serving staff at Rêve Bistro, on top of raising their three young daughters.

Rêve Bistro's menu is seasonal. Magu has connections in the Bay Area and he knows where to get the quality he wants, and he has the confidence to reject what is not up to his standards. The menu combines what people expect from a French bistro with modernized concepts that are

found in the best bistros today, such as a surprisingly delicious raw kale salad, tender, with no trace of bitterness and nicely paired with apples, radishes and seeds. In the same spirit, the main dishes include the classic bistro "steak-frites" and the "moules-frites," and add dishes with venison, guinea hen, cod or braised beef cheeks. Vegetables are also interesting, as accompaniment or as a vegetarian dish: mushrooms, quince, celeriac root, and chestnuts. The winter menu will change to the spring menu by the end of March.

Rêve Bistro was an immediate success from the day it opened, just through word of mouth. "We take reservations," said Laura Magu, "but we keep a few tables open so people can come up spontaneously." On the first Saturday night after their soft opening, a line formed outside the door of the intimate restaurant on Moraga Road in Lafayette. Because of limited parking and city regulations, it is only open in the evening. The restaurant has a charming garden that will open as well as soon as weather permits.

Rêve Bistro
960 Moraga Road, Lafayette
(925) 385-0793
revebistro.com

Lamorinda Weekly business articles are intended to inform the community about local business activities, not to endorse a particular company, product or service.

business briefs

24 Hour Fitness Moraga Welcomes New Club Manager 351 Rheem Blvd., Moraga (925) 377-2400 – 24hourfitness.com

Patrick Russell, the new club manager at 24 Hour Fitness Moraga Rheem, has worked in several 24 Hour Fitness clubs throughout the Bay Area during his career. Russell brings a passion for fitness to his new position that works well with the large variety of fitness options that the club offers to members of all ages and fitness levels. Amenities include personal training, TRX Suspension Training, TC24 (the latest group training programs) as well as Group X classes including specific classes for the Active+ audience, yoga, Zumba and Step. "Fitness has been incredibly impactful on my life, both professionally and personally, and I am thrilled to share my passion with the town of Moraga. Our club and its programs bring together a community of like-minded people," he said. "Moraga residents visit the gym to take classes with friends and explore new fitness solutions. This kind of support is proven to reinforce our core lifestyle principles of mindset, movement, nutrition and regeneration – the essential recipe for achieving personal fitness goals."



Patrick Russell Photo provided

Miramonte Alum Joins Pacific Union Real Estate 51 Moraga Way, Suite 1, Orinda (510) 282-4420 – TerriBatesWalker.com

Terri Bates Walker, an Orinda native and graduate of Miramonte High School Class of 1989, brings an extraordinary professional background to Pacific Union Real Estate. A former practicing real estate attorney with a passion for architecture and design, Walker is one of the area's top producers, representing both sellers and buyers in the Lamorinda community and beyond. "Through my association with Pacific Union, I can offer my clients unparalleled marketing and networking power, while remaining 100 percent committed to client satisfaction and achieving a successful outcome," says Walker, who is a graduate of University of California, Davis (B.A. 1994) and University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law (J.D. 1997). She lives in Orinda with her husband, Henry, an attorney and graduate of Acalanes High School Class of 1988, and their three sons, who attend Sleepy Hollow Elementary, Orinda Intermediate and Campolindo High schools.



Terri Walker Photo provided

News from the three Chambers of Commerce Lafayette

Monthly Mixer at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 24 at Las Trampas, 3460 Lana Lane.

Coffee with the Mayor, Mark Mitchell, at 8 a.m. Friday, Feb. 26 in the Chamber Conference Room.

Citizen of the Year Dinner Honoring Tom Steuber from 6 to 9 p.m. March 18 at the Lafayette Park Hotel and Spa. The Lafayette Chamber is proud to present this year's special

If you have a business brief to share, please contact
storydesk@lamorindaweekly.com

award, with co-sponsor Lamorinda Weekly, to Tom Steuber, who has presided as Scoutmaster for Lafayette's Boy Scout Troop 204 for 12 years, and through his company, Associated Services, has reached out and supported underprivileged teachers, schools and classrooms throughout the Bay Area. He is a remarkable humanitarian and a special Lafayette neighbor. For reservations, visit lafayettechamber.org or call (925) 284-7404. Please make your reservations no later than Wednesday, March 16.

Moraga

March Entrepreneur's Lunch. Attorney Asha B. Wilkerson will discuss "Key Laws to Know as you Launch and Grow your Business" from noon to 1 p.m. on Monday, March 14 at Home/made kitchen café & bakery located at 337 Rheem Blvd. in Moraga. Members and non-members welcome. Meet and mingle with other local business owners. \$10 includes lunch. Reservations are required at Kathe@moragachamber.org.

Orinda

Save the date for "A Night of Comedy," featuring headliner Brad Williams from Showtime's highest rated comedy special, "Fun Size," and Ben Feldmen at 7:30 p.m. Friday, March 4 at the Orinda Theatre. For ticket and event information, visit www.orindachamber.org, or call (925) 254-3909. (See story page B4)

Celebrating an Anniversary?

If your business is celebrating a significant anniversary (5, 10, 20 years or more ...) send us a photo of your business, the owner(s) or the staff with specific information about your business and what you're celebrating, and we'll include it in an upcoming issue.