

Former owner buys back Vickers Tavern

Nov 20, 2008

By Michael Klein

Arturo Burigatto says he couldn't bear to see Vickers Tavern, the Chester County landmark he created in 1972 and sold in 1999, be transformed into a funeral home after its closing early this year.

So Burigatto bought it back and cleaned it up.

Burigatto, who also has Primavera Pizza Kitchen in Downingtown and used to run Kennedy-Supplee Mansion in Valley Forge, bought back Vickers (192 E. Welsh Pool Rd., Exton, 610-363-7998) last week.

Its style is much as it was in the old days - quiet, romantic, genteel - with traditional, French-influenced continental cuisine (oysters Rockefeller, rack of lamb, filet mignon) and tableside preparation (Dover sole, steak Diane flambé). Dinner entrees are \$25.50 to \$44.

Dave Robinson, who worked at Primavera, Duling-Kurtz House and Le Bec-Fin, is chef. It's open for lunch weekdays and dinner Mondays through Saturdays.

The circa-1832 building housing Vickers, by the way, was a stop on the underground railroad, the home of Quaker potter John Vickers, who hid slaves in his woodpiles.

What's new

Boutros and Ramona Semaan, who got started in the business by cooking for the annual Lebanese Festival at St. Maron Maronite Church in South Philly, have opened Boutros' Mediterranean Specialties, a stand in the Bellevue's downstairs food court (Broad and Walnut Streets, 215-545-2633). Boutros Semaan, with his brother, Paul, also have a stand at the farmer's market in Stratford (using the recipes of their 93-year-old mother). The Semaans came downtown at the urging of longtime customer George Rubin, vice chairman of Pennsylvania Realty Investment Trust, which owns the Bellevue. Menu includes spinach and meat pies, moussaka, grape leaves, falafel, kibbi, and vegetarian stuffed peppers. The food court recently upgraded, including new tables, chairs and banquettes.

Jeffrey Power, former chef de cuisine at Conshohocken's Blackfish, is executive chef at T. Burke's, a new French bistro at the Dolce Valley Forge Hotel (301 W. Dekalb Pike, King of Prussia, 610-337-1200). Decor includes plush seating, dark wood, and brushed stainless and granite finishes, and there are billiards, darts, table shuffleboards and six flat screens. (The name honors Thomas J. Burke, a friend and business associate of Capital Hospitality Group, the hotel and developer. Burke, who died of leukemia in 2006, introduced Capital Hospitality to Andy Dolce, chairman and managing partner of Dolce International. It opens daily at 3 p.m.; small menu includes appetizers, small pizzas, burgers and a few entrees, mostly \$12 to \$16.

Briefly noted

Yangming in Bryn Mawr has appointed a chef-in-residence, Jian Zhang, a master chef from Sichuan. He previously was chef-in-residence at Wu Liang Ye in New York. The length of Zheng's stay at Yangming is undermined. Brendan McGrew, who started at Manayunk's Bourbon Blue as a line cook while in college, has taken over the place. New chef is Mark Ziebis.

Pascual Cancelliere, who came up in the business at Ristorante Longano, Volare, and the original Butcher's Cafe with his father, John (who died in 2005), is developing an Italian-Argentine BYO at 943 S . Ninth St . in the Italian Market. Cancelliere has no name yet but hopes to open in February.

Need a nip of Rémy Martin BlackPearl? Owners of Union Trust, the steak house opening in February at 717 Chestnut St., bought a bottle of the cognac (\$33,000) at the recent Philadelphia Whiskey Festival.

Contact columnist Michael Klein at 215-854-5514 or mklein@phillynews.com. See his blog "The Insider" at <http://go.philly.com/insider>.

Find a restaurant open for Thanksgiving: <http://go.philly.com/turkey>