

CURRENT ISSUE | JULY 2007

## PHANTOM DINER

### Josephine's Restaurant



## DEPARTMENTS

[DISCOVER VOICES](#)  
[NOTEBOOK](#)  
[A LA CARTE](#)  
[OUT & ABOUT](#)  
[MEDIA MIX](#)  
[ON THE FLIP SIDE](#)  
[REACTIONS](#)

Excerpted from Central PA magazine, July 2007

## GOURMET PIONEER

Your Phantom Diner reviewed Josephine's for this magazine a decade ago. It since has changed chef and owner. It was very good back then. It now is simply great.

In fact, Josephine's — in the quaint little town of Marietta along the Susquehanna River, sorta between Lancaster, York and Harrisburg — just might be the best gourmet restaurant in the region. This, my friends, is fine food. And the wine cellar is extraordinary.

The place is pricey, and I mean New York pricey. Appetizers run about \$10 a pop. Entrees start around \$23 and head north toward \$40. One entree, a surf-and-turf that matches an eight-ounce filet mignon with an eight-ounce crab cake (the largest crab cake I've personally seen in a serious restaurant), is around \$60. And even eschewing the most expensive dishes, a couple having a cocktail and/or wine with dinner can get to the \$120 range in a hurry. And that's without a tip.

But, trust me, the décor, the ambiance, the building, the town, the service, the attention to detail, the quality of the food and its presentation, and the personal interest shown to diners by staff and chef/owner Daniel LeBoon (a name evoking a pioneer spirit — a spirit he certainly lives up to in every gastronomic sense) all combine to make the price well worth the visit. At multiple meals, I did not encounter a morsel of food that wasn't delicious.

And there is another plus. Even though costs are upscale, the atmosphere is relaxed. This is not some stuffy, snooty, putting-on-airs fancy French bistro. The building is an 18th-century log home with hardwood floors, exposed beams and fireplaces, and beautifully decorated.

It is a vacation from dining venues with sleek lines, metal and glass and large, loud open spaces. Josephine's has simple elegance. It's perfect for a special-occasion meal or if seeking to dazzle a date.

## JOSEPHINE'S RESTAURANT

324 W. Market St., Marietta;  
serves dinner Tuesday through  
Saturday and Sunday brunch; full  
bar and liquor license; parking on  
street or small lot across the  
street; takes major cards; reserva-  
tions recommended; 717-426-  
2003.

## REACT TO THIS ARTICLE

Please specify the article to which you are reacting, and include your name and town in your signature. Sending us a reaction implies permission to post your message on our website [and consider it for publication in the print edition].

## READ REACTIONS

to Central PA stories

Two minor quibbles (hey, The Phantom wouldn't be The Phantom without a couple of quibbles): A server offering an off-menu special that costs \$62 should mention the cost before it shows up on the check (my long-held view is, servers always should quote prices of specials offered); and piped-in radio music, no matter how easy-listening the station might be, just doesn't work in this lovely setting.

To the food. The menu changes seasonally but is a reliable mix of tastes and choices. The difficulty for me is making a choice. Too often, every appetizer and every entree is too much to my liking.

Appetizers might include fried oysters over a green bean and pecan salad; foie gras with a fig onion citrus marmalade; a small rack of lamb served cold with a strawberry compote; smoked salmon and shiitake mushrooms; or steamed mussels Provençal baked in butter.

Some portions are large, some are not. The salmon is a meal by itself. And delicious. The mussels are among the tastiest I've eaten, though I certainly wouldn't have balked at a being served a few more of them.

There are always a couple of homemade soups and a couple of special salads, including a Caesar. Entrees include wonderful French bread and butter, a mixed-greens salad, veggies and a starch.

Entrees themselves are stunning. On a recent visit I had a brace of soft-shell crabs, perfectly done, bursting with flavor. A chef favorite, braised boneless short ribs in a pomegranate grapefruit reduction, is becoming known for winning praise. The eight-ounce crab cake (served by itself as an entree) is all lump crabmeat bound together with a little shrimp mousse and is — apart from its heft — astoundingly good. (Really, it's the size of something you'd expect to see at a gimmicky all-you-can-eat boardwalk buffet.)

There are simple dishes raised to new levels, such as a chicken breast, pan-seared with blackberry vinaigrette and topped with shavings of aged Gouda cheese. And there are not-so-often-seen dishes such as vegetarian Napoleon, a tower of pomme Annette (thinly layered potatoes), carrots, wild mushrooms, green beans and greens; or confit of slow-roasted duck served off the bone with penne pasta, tomatoes, sweet peas and bacon in a light Parmesan sauce.

Desserts alone are worth the trip. There are classics such as crème caramel, crème brûlée and pecan tart. And if you like these dishes, you'll love them as made at Josephine's. But I highly recommend at least one person at your table order the chef's home-made ice cream made with liqueurs (flavors vary). It's filling, but fabulous.

There is, as you might expect, gourmet French press coffee, including Hawaiian Kona and Jamaican Blue Mountain, cappuccino, espresso and pricey 20-year-old ports. There is also, fortunately, historic Marietta, the oldest borough in Lancaster County, a former river-crossing spot that flourished because of the Pennsylvania Canal and the Pennsylvania Railroad. I say fortunately, because after a meal at Josephine's, a nice long walk is in order, and Marietta's streets, with restored Victorian and Federal homes, are great for a nice long walk.

If you haven't been, go. If you haven't been in a decade, go back.