



FOOD & WINE

A Local Favorite Celebrates Its Birthday

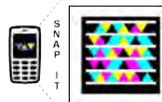
The Freight House Turns Seven in Style

By Brenda Lange

As The Freight House—the place for big city dining in the heart of Doylestown—enters its seventh year as a popular, stylish and respected establishment its management has big plans to celebrate, and they want their customers to come along for the ride.

“We’re ready for exciting changes, ready to implement suggestions from our customers and make inspired renovations,” explains Pam Northrop-Gundlach, one of the restaurant’s eight owners.

Regulars, who come from as far away as Princeton and Philadelphia, and those discovering The Freight House for the first time, are in agreement: They love the food and they love the ambiance. The dramatic high ceilings with exposed ductwork, antique fixtures, original art, comfortable leather banquettes, interior brick walls and mood lighting all say elegance. The food is on par with any city eatery.



Visit www.gettag.mobi to download the free app and then scan the tag with your phone to be directed to a TV spot about The Freight House.

The establishment is located on the site of a former, fully operational freight house at the end of Septa's Lansdale/Doylestown line (the former R5 line). The building was abandoned and dilapidated when the investors came along. They worked closely with SEPTA and Doylestown Borough and followed the guidelines of the Historical Architectural Review Board to return the site to its former glory.

Maintaining Integrity

It was important to the owners to maintain the building's architectural integrity while incorporating an atmosphere to rival any restaurant, says Northrop-Gundlach. When the doors opened in 2003, The Freight House quickly became a true destination restaurant.

The restaurant now is heading full steam into its celebration with some ambitious plans for the future; a way to bring the restaurant into the next season with a flair. Combining this desire for fresh and invigorating while maintaining the atmosphere that customers know and love is paramount for Northrop-Gundlach and her partners.

"We are incorporating some new elements that will create three separate spaces," she says. "We're responding to conversations we've had with our loyal followers, and have come up with something different, that will carry a huge wow factor."

Charged with creating the buzz is Plumstead interior designer Rich Vergine and his business partner, William Sloan of William A. Sloan Creative Strategies.

"Our goal with the interior is actually three-fold," says Vergine, "to capitalize on the industrial chic aspect that was painstakingly preserved in the original renovation seven years ago, and to elevate the level of sophistication by utilizing a more contemporary color palette, furnishings and wall décor. Finally, we were very mindful of trying to maintain that upscale steak house feel that our customers continue to enjoy."

Immediately upon entering The Freight House, customers will see the results of the duo's creative expertise. The lobby has become a chic lounge, with a larger-than-life mural and stylish ottomans laid out in intimate seating arrangements. The reception area has been transformed into a sleek introduction to the main body of the restaurant.

The bar will soon be its own entity, with distinctive imagery, and will provide the real wow. "It will be very modern, very metropolitan, with bold black, white and gray concepts," says Northrop-Gundlach. A draping divider will be added to separate the bar activity from the dining experience, adding a grand feel. Just as the restaurant will remain traditional, the patio will retain its train platform décor, however some conceptual changes will be made here as well.

Unique and Delicious

Under the direction of General Manager Matthew Rafferty, (Starr Restaurants, Sullivan's Steakhouse) the team has taken the current successes of the dining room and special event programs, and expanded to become a unique steakhouse.

"Our menu will perform on a different level than generic steakhouses," he says. "We're taking the reins and leading the region in culinary innovation and menu design. We have a very talented team here. Great cuts and variety of beef and big seafood steaks is the premise for 2010 with Josh Homacki's creative influence all over it."



Executive chef Joshua Homacki (Lacroix, Garces Restaurant Group, Snack Bar) has been at the helm about a year, putting his individual stamp on the menu. And guests like what they've come to know, trusting Homacki to deliver.

The well-known raw bar will remain and will be joined by a variety of beef cuts prepared with a creative edge. Large, fresh seafood steaks, an array of side dishes, delicious desserts and after-dinner drinks will present a well-rounded taste experience. Small plates will still appear on the menu for those who wish to eat lighter.

"We're keeping our progressive steakhouse cuisine but putting a new spin on it so it's different than what people experience at a standard steakhouse," Homacki adds.

The Freight House continues to excel at combining innovative culinary design with elegant ambiance, and the region can't wait to see what comes next. **BL**

Brenda Lange is a professional writer in Bucks County (www.brendalange.com).