

Dinner with the BREAKFAST club

By Sue Barry / Breakfast Club Photography by Ben Reeder / Additional photography by Will Marks

The Essence of Fine Dining

There is something to be said about in-house, hand-cut steaks and Justin said it best with his fists clenched and his head shaking, "Mmm." Dennis and Michelle agreed, pronouncing the filet mignon at the Stockyard Inn to be the most moist, subtle, and tasty filet they ever had. That is a bold statement. And, there were many other bold statements made by the *101 Rose Breakfast Club* throughout the course of the evening as they dined, individual course by individual course, at the classic and clubby historic steakhouse.

Built as a farmhouse in 1750, James Buchanan owned the building while he served his term in the White House in the mid-1800s, and the *Breakfast Club* dined in one of the original rooms of the house. At the turn of the century, the Lancaster Stockyards was established on the grounds and the Stockyard Inn became the gathering place for cattlemen to eat, drink, chat, and sleep. But, it was with a grand awakening that our radio crew found out that the Stockyard Inn's food and beverages have become conservatively contemporary, with the entire staff adding imagination to the familiar.

For instance, Bartender Kimberly's innovative refreshing lemon cocktail is much more than a lemon drop martini. Made with fresh lemons and spiked with citron vodka and hard lemonade, Kimberly's concoction

was redolent with rosemary and ginger. Michelle commented that it was the first time she ever wanted to sniff a mixed drink. Dennis quipped that Michelle found her new bartender. Owner Athena (mother) and Jim (son) Fournaris provided a warm welcome to add to that cool drink.

The Stockyard Inn has been in operation with the Fournaris family since 1952, and a menu from 1952 hangs in the hallway. Their signature snapper soup was featured on that original menu and it is a part of the current fare some sixty years later. Traditional in preparation but not in presentation, the Philadelphia-style snapper soup, earthy with undertones of clove, was delivered to the *Breakfast Club* in espresso cups with a shot of the obligatory sherry on the side. Our knowledgeable waiter recommended trying the soup alone first and then adding the sherry to our liking. That was great advice, as all three radio personalities preferred a different degree of the must-have spirited condiment. Some folks are drawn to the Stockyard Inn specifically for this sienna-hued, rich turtle soup. Dennis wallowed in the flavor of the soup as he referred to the snapping turtles in his pond at home, although he has yet to perform the arduous task of cleaning and filleting one of those beasts. He may want to keep his snapping turtles in his pond, but the wanted recipe for the Stockyard Inn's snapper soup is kept in a safe. You know this soup will never be altered or replaced.





Chef Wilson prepares one of the best crab cakes around. After tasting one, Michelle questioned how anything else could be so good, as the lightly broiled surface gave way to the mighty clumps of unadulterated, glistening, choice jumbo lump crabmeat. The Colossal Maryland Crab Cakes had a double meaning in the eyes of our guys as jumbo applied to the serving size as well as the lump crabmeat. The *Breakfast Club* now knows why these wonders are one of the Stockyard Inn's best sellers. Accompanied by decorative dabs of house made mustard sauce and a side of apple and fennel slaw, Justin blurted out, "you have the pure sweet crab, the anise rich crunchy slaw and the zing of the mustard sauce; it just all works together." Paired with Athena's choice of a bright and fruity Honig Sauvignon Blanc, the *Breakfast Club* did not need anything else. But, they meandered on, good sports as they are.



Legend has it that blue crabs begin shedding their shells with the first full moon in May. Legend has it that Chef Wilson cannot let those molted crustaceans get away without pleasing his patrons. It was soft shell crab season and the crew was notably pleased with the chef's presentation of tempura soft shell crab. Succulent and subtly briny, enhanced with a moderately piquant roasted red pepper sauce, the tempura crab was plated side-up with sides of plantain fried rice and tender and mild baby bok choy. Kimberly brought out her freshly made champagne sangria, with chunks of apple, orange and lime, which was a great way to honor late spring and cool down the slight bite of the pepper sauce.

From the many choices in the extensive, climate-controlled wine cellar, Justin was the first to mention the pairing of a glass of medium-bodied, boldly buttery Bouchaine Chardonnay, as a perfect match with the

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Published in **Fine Living Lancaster**
Issue Number Nineteen • August, 2011

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lemon coriander-glazed halibut. Athena all but got a standing ovation as any accomplished or neophyte oenophile would be delighted in every sip with every bite of this combination. The firm and nutty halibut rested on a smashed sweet pea knoll, topped with pea tendrils. Poached cherry tomatoes in a broth of olive oil and local herbs rounded out the dish.

A velvety and smooth Hardy's Pinot Noir was ready to be enjoyed with the next course. Remember that aforementioned juicy hand-cut filet mignon? Think of it now with the luxury factor heightened threefold. Our radio stars basked in the perfectly cooked medium-rare filet with a Pinot Noir reduction, and a sultry side of silky foie gras topped with red onion marmalade and woodsy truffle vinaigrette coated arugula. Again, Justin could not say enough about the way in which

everything worked together, including the scent of lavender blossom. With another bold statement, Dennis said to Michelle, "you take Kimberly home, I'll take Wilson home."

In his flavor kingdom, Chef Wilson caught and conquered these three meager on-air subjects and turned them into sybarites. Justin declared Athena a Greek goddess for her skill at pairing the wine with the food, and the *Breakfast Club* silently conspired to find a way to eventually convince the folks at the Stockyard Inn to host a wine pairing dinner.

Alas, it was not over. A delightful, not too sweet, not too tart, lemon panna cotta showed up in a pool of strawberry rhubarb "soup" garnished with candied lemon and strawberry. This Italian-cooked cream dessert would take on any cr me br l e anywhere at any time. Did you know that cheesecake had its origins over 4,000 years ago in Ancient Greece? Jim has spent the last twenty years perfecting his cheesecake and it shows. Light yet decadent with a candy-like crust, embellished with a dollop of whipped cream and strawberry sauce on the side, it had every sign of the tried and true. For the *Breakfast Club*, the strawberry sauce was etched with the initials, "FLL" in cream, and as such, Jim made a bold statement in return. 🍷

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