



Jim and Kristina Burke

Warm, Welcoming & Web Savvy

JAMES Has it All



By Jim Young

“Awesome”

is how Kristina Burke describes working with her husband, Chef Jim Burke, at their first restaurant venture, the JAMES on 8th Street in Philadelphia, PA. The young couple has divided the workload. Kristina states, “His strengths are my weaknesses and my strengths are his weaknesses. We have complete trust in each other. When I am in the kitchen, it’s his kitchen and when he is beyond the kitchen door, it is my responsibility.”

JAMES is a fine dining establishment in the Bella Vista neighborhood serving modern American cuisine. They pride themselves on impeccable customer service while providing a dining environment that is both elegant and friendly. The menu focuses on local, seasonal produce, humanely raised meats, wild seafood, and artisan cheeses. JAMES uses only fresh, locally grown ingredients – this allows the menu to change with the seasons, providing variety and an element of surprise.

You can order a Hendricks & Honeydew (Hendricks gin, winter melon & candied thyme, pictured on this issue’s cover) in their modern bar and lounge area, complete with loveseats, cocktail tables, and a glowing fireplace. The JAMES cocktails are top-shelf creations mixed with house-made syrups, fresh juices and seasonal ingredients. The “boutique” wine list offers the very

best selections from small wineries dedicated to natural methods and sustainable viticulture.

If you want to know what to expect when you enter the JAMES for the first time, go to their website www.jameson8th.com. “We designed it so that it is warm and welcoming as it would be if you were walking into the restaurant,” Kristina explains. The website was designed around the same scheme as the restaurant, using

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enticing photos of the food and warm inviting pictures inside the restaurant.

The Burkes realize the importance of cyberspace – most first time visitors will have already visited the JAMES virtually via the website. “Not only does our website give you the feel of the restaurant, you can also make your reservation online using Open Table reservation service. The service is incredible. We know immediately when a reservation is made. And our customers can make them at any time. We have customers making reservations all times of the day and night.” Fifty percent of their new weekend reservations come from the web. “Online reservations are a definite advantage for both the customer and us,” says Kristina.

There is little down time for the couple. When Kristina is not in the front of the house, she is helping Jim prepare for the evening meal in the back of the house. Chef Jim Burke’s passion for cooking began over a decade ago while working with Master

Chef Vince Alberici at The Marker restaurant in the Adams Mark Hotel. Alberici inspired a vision of what it meant to be a chef – a dedication to quality ingredients, patient technique, beautiful presentation, and careful consideration of the client’s dining experience.

Jim worked at one of Philadelphia’s most highly awarded restaurants, Vetri. He worked under nationally renowned chef Mark Vetri, and was afforded much freedom in the kitchen. His talents grew along with his interest in authentic Italian cuisine. Jim left Vetri to pursue his dream of cooking in Italy.

Jim soon had the honor of working with Chef Paolo Frosio in Ristorante Frosio, a Michelin star restaurant located in Alme, Italy, a small town outside of Bergamo. There he learned the difficult task of exalting the flavors of a



few pristine ingredients in a dish, rather than losing the integrity of those ingredients in an overpowering jumble. To master Italian cuisine meant to cook simply and attentively. Jim continued to work in Italian restaurants and vineyards for the next fifteen months.

Upon returning to the United States, Jim became the Chef of Vivo Enoteca in Wayne, PA and received three stars in his first review. When offered an Executive Chef position at Steven Starr’s Angelina in downtown Philadelphia, Jim seized the opportunity and put into practice the lessons he learned already in his exciting career. Jim gives new meaning to the word “presentation”. His personal cuisine is a reflection of all his past experience with a flare for uniqueness that satisfies today’s demanding customer. He looks forward to cooking for many customers to come.

Kristina studied public relations at Temple University and started her career in the hospitality industry by waiting on tables. She fell in love with the fine dining atmosphere and has held various positions at a number of the city’s finest restaurants, including Pasion!, Vetri, Striped Bass, and Miel Patisserie. Her love for the culinary world led her to Italy where she explored the land, culture and people. After two exciting years of working in professional kitchens and vineyards abroad, she returned home to Philadelphia. Upon her arrival, Chef Robert Bennett approached Kristina with an opportunity to manage his Miel Patisserie in Philadelphia. Kristina was delighted and after opening the 17th Street pastry boutique, she became Bennett’s wholesale manager for the tri-state area and for its hotels and restaurants. In January of 2006, Kristina became the director of sales and business development for Charles Roman Catering. Kristina realizes the importance of community involvement – she is actively engaged in the Bella Vista neighborhood.

The mission at JAMES is to serve the highest quality food paired with thoughtfully chosen wines. They strongly support Pennsylvania associations for sustainable agriculture, local farmers, and wine educators because these suppliers maintain a standard of excellence in keeping with their own. Their kitchen is devoted to finding the finest ingredients and treating them with the utmost respect.

Once again, please visit their website at www.jameson8th.com.
Photos courtesy of Jason Varney Photography. www.varneyphoto.com

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