

Renaud's Patisserie and Bistro

"Someone's In The Kitchen"

By **RICHARD** and **AMANDA PAYATT**
Special to CASA

A **HIDDEN TREASURE** awaits the adventurous diner. Look beyond the scaffolding and plywood working its way around the Loreto Plaza on State and Las Positas, and you might find yourself magically transported to a romantic Bistro in France. We did, when we popped into the elegant interior of Renaud's for a bite and found ourselves swept away by sweet memories of Paris.

Bringing a fresh dose of charm to Upper State Street, Renaud's Patisserie and Bistro has opened up a whole new culinary front to this part of town, French Bistro. We will begin by saying that we have always been big fans of Bistro cooking. The freshness, speed, and design simplicity of the classic Bistro menu make it a meal choice that is hard to beat. Renaud Gonthier, chef and co-owner, understands the formula well. Renaud's credo is to never have a customer wait more than ten minutes for their food. That is because in France, a lunch hour means just that; one hour for lunch. Sounds



Renaud Gonthier, chef

easy enough. It isn't easy to do. And harder still to achieve it with the flair that Renaud manages.

With a kitchen staff of three cooks and two pastry cooks, he has created a menu format that is filled with Bistro classics that are prepared quickly, deliciously, and inexpensively. Try his marvelous quiche, which changes every day. It is neither too fluffy, nor too fussy. It is concentrated, full of flavor, and fills you up without making you uncomfortably full. Or try the Tartine, a bit of bread, some condiment or side dish item piled on, and then topped with melted cheese. We haven't had

one this good since we can't remember when. Renaud's Croque Monsieur, a broiled ham and gruyere sandwich topped with Béchamel sauce, is rarely heard of in this country. One bite of this, and you will be smelling the salt air of Saint Malô. Another bistro classic, Pain Bagnat, is also on the menu: tuna, niçoise olives, peppers, boiled eggs, anchovies, and pesto on a baguette. These Bistro classics come flying out of the kitchen, along with many other delights. The salads are the straightforward salad composée that changes just a bit every day, so that it is always as fresh as can be, and always interesting. All of this pairs handily with a short, but all-French wine list. It is the food he grew up with, with a Burgundian flair, and a commitment to absolutely fresh, seasonal, local food that fine restaurants live by.

However, it might be the pastries that will make you fall in love with Renaud's. The pastry

counter is Renaud's favorite place in the restaurant. He loves good food, but Pastry is his passion. The cakes are pure French standard time. To get flavors like this, we have to go to the Buci Market on the Left Bank. The macaroons will drive you out of your mind. This is the real deal Parisian macaroon. Pistachio is our favorite. The favorite Croissants are right out of dreams of Paris and the nougat is absolutely out of this world! Try an afternoon break of something from the case with the coffee, which they have roasted especially for them by Peerless Coffee.

Renaud's commitment to food comes from his background. He grew up in the south of Burgundy, in a family of cooks. He schooled in the Lycée Professionnel Hotelier de l'Hermitage, in Grenoble, and took two degrees there. Consequently, he concerns himself with doing what he knows and enjoys, and cooking what he knows and loves. He has worked in a one star Michelin restaurant in Bourgogne, as well as for Trust House Forté hotel chain in England, and the Ritz Hotel in St. Thomas.

It was in St. Thomas that Renaud, a handsome redhead, met a lovely young lady named Nichole, on vacation from Santa Monica. She was visiting a friend who also worked at the Ritz. That friend brought her some pastries from the kitchen. Nichole flipped. Invited to meet the pastry chef, she found herself in a whirlwind romance that has so far chalked up five happy years of marriage, one darling little girl, and a move to Santa Barbara to be near Nichole's father and to open this wonderful bakery.

Baking classes are in the works. Also in the works will be outdoor seating near the new fountains being installed nearby.

Breakfast at Renaud's starts at 7am, an hour after the pastry team has put the morning's croissants, chocolate croissants, and brioches into the ovens. The kitchen serves eggs, omelets, French toast, Irish oatmeal, and Viennoiserie...



Finishing touches

otherwise known as the French version of Viennese pastries. Nichole still remembers the first time we came to the Bistro. We bought one chocolate croissant, and ambled out the door. We hadn't time to get halfway across the parking lot before we burst back through the door before leaving with four more chocolate croissants. Apparently, this is a common occurrence. The original plan for the restaurant was to make fifty croissants a day. They now make two hundred and fifty a day. Worth crossing town for? Definitely! Renaud's Bistro is like going to Paris for breakfast without having to worry about going through airport security. New Yorkers may be able to breakfast in Manhattan and then hop to the City of Lights for a delicious afternoon meal. We just need to hop over to Loreto Plaza.

Lucky us.



French Pastry Heaven



Richard and Amanda Payatt

Renaud's Patisserie and Bistro is located next to Harry's in Loreto Plaza, 3315 State St. It is open from 7am to 5pm, closing at 3pm on Sundays.

Amanda and **Richard Payatt** will be combining their considerable writing skills with their incredible knowledge and experience of fine dining to bring you this column.

National Wine Storage Trend Hits Santa Barbara

Santa Barbara Cellars wine storage center, the first of its kind in Santa Barbara, is part of a national trend to serve collectors without home cellars.

O **NCE A HOBBY FOR THE ELITE FEW**, wine collecting has attracted a much broader demographic in recent decades. Today's collectors range from young professionals living in small apartments to master collectors with three hundred cases or more.

Individuals without a home cellar, or

those with a full cellar, are seeking out professional wine storage centers to keep their collection in optimal condition.

That is where Santa Barbara architect and developer Trudi Carey comes in. The builder of award-winning Patterson Self-Storage, Carey opened Santa Barbara Cellars at the request of existing clients.

Santa Barbara Cellars offers temperature and humidity controlled cellars with personal access seven days a week. The new center, conveniently located off Highway 101, combines modern technology and security with a sophisticated design. It has cellars small enough for a four-case collection and large enough for three-hundred cases.

"We are very excited about our grand opening and we've already had a great response," said Carey, who expects the center to fill up before the end of summer. "As the weather gets hotter, people become

more concerned about keeping their wine in the garage or basement."

Wine requires special conditions to mature properly and, according to wine experts, most home environments don't meet the criteria. "Temperature, humidity, and lighting are the most important considerations when storing wine," said Geof Wyatt, collector and president of Wyatt Technology in Santa Barbara. "The proper storage conditions can turn a good wine into a great wine; and likewise, the wrong conditions can spoil your entire collection," added Wyatt.

After researching wine storage centers from New York to San Francisco, The Carey Group incorporated all the latest features in their center's design, including a digital surveillance system and individual cellar door alarms. However, manager Jane Jewell points out that they don't rely on technology alone. "Office



Trudi Carey



High tech systems allow clients to keep track of their collection.

managers are onsite to monitor the property and assist clients seven days a week," Jewell explained.

For more information, call 964-0924 or visit www.sbccellars.com.

