

French-American & Fresh RIVER OAKS

TEXT BY MAGGIE WEIR | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAY ADKINS

River Oaks is owned and operated by award-winning Master Chef Jose Gutierrez. The title of Master Chef stands as one of the most coveted accolades a chef can earn, “I was voted by my peers,” Gutierrez says. “All over the world.”

Gutierrez began his career at the Professional Culinary School in Manosque, France. The French-born chef has made his home in Memphis for over 30 years, however, and considers himself a true Southerner. When asked his favorite things about living in Memphis, it’s no surprise local eats are close to his heart. “There are so many favorites,” Gutierrez says. “Southern hospitality, great weather, variety of food professionals and availability of farmer-grown vegetables.”

The French-American bistro located in East Memphis provides guests with an inspired and unforgettable dining experience. Having trained under Paul Bocuse, celebrated chef and creator of Nouvelle Cuisine, Gutierrez is well-versed in haute cuisine. The chef has been satisfying Memphians with his culinary skills for over 30 years, 22 of those marked by a distinguished career at the Peabody Hotel’s Chez Philippe.

The chef’s food philosophy is straightforward — to know the importance of the foundation of cooking and to share that knowledge with others, as well as to learn new techniques and to always respect the clients’ taste.

As owner and chef of one of Memphis’ premier restaurants, Chef Gutierrez keeps the focus on the changing seasons and the simplicity of fine ingredients. “I am most passionate about fresh ingredients and true taste of ingredients,”

shares Gutierrez. “We make everything from scratch at River Oaks.”

Certified by Project Green Fork, an initiative that contributes to a sustainable Mid South by helping reduce environmental impacts and focuses on strengthening homegrown, River Oaks takes pride in buying seasonal ingredients from local suppliers. The menu is a reflection of the chef’s values, featuring the freshest seafood and the best in dry-aged beef. Utilizing local growers guarantees the freshest

seasonal greens, caramelized onions, roasted pepper and olive tapenade is a thrilling starter. As for the chef’s favorite menu item: “duck confit,” he says. When it comes to meats, menu standouts include the spiced duck breast with sweet potato and cranberry port wine sauce as well as Chef Jose’s sirloin burger with bacon and a side of pomme frites; add a farm fried egg and gruyere for the full French experience. For seafood, the sea scallops and homemade angel hair dish served with seasonal vegetables and citrus beurre blanc is both delicate and luxurious.



“We have an approachable menu, and we are always happy to customize the dish,” says Gutierrez. “There is something for everyone — River Oaks is a warm, inviting, comfortable bistro.”

Saving room for dessert at River Oaks is a must; the Key lime pie with nut crust and dulce de leche fresh whipped cream is unforgettable. The warm dark chocolate fondant cake with berries and vanilla ice cream will satisfy the sweetest sweet tooth.

produce and specialty items, and the chef’s commitment to serving only boutique and free-range farm meats assures the unmatched consistency and quality of River Oaks’ cuisine. The specials featured on a particular day alone are enough to tantalize the taste buds—from homemade agnolotti with ricotta, sweet corn, lobster, celeriac and chili oil to gluten-free organic fried chicken with mashed potato and truffle sauce—possibly the perfect French-American dish.

An everyday menu favorite is the jumbo lump crab cakes served with seasonal greens, fresh avocado, mango and citrus vinaigrette. Warm goat cheese provencal salad with

River Oaks also boasts one of the most comprehensive wine lists in the Mid South. With more than 300 selections available by the bottle and over 75 by the glass, guests can experience the area’s most popular vintages as well as wines from more exclusive labels and vineyards.

If you want a memorable dining experience, impeccable service and unforgettable cuisine—look no further than this modern, yet comfortable jewel of a restaurant. ■



Photo courtesy of River Oaks

