

NORTHERN *Virginia* EXPOSURE

MEET FOUR RESTAURATEURS
MAKING WAVES
OUTSIDE THE BELTWAY

by Kelly Magyarics, DWS

Have you heard? Some of the D.C. area's best restaurants are nowhere near the city limits. Loudoun and Fairfax County in Virginia, which tout the country's highest and second-highest per capita incomes, respectively, are both home to buzzy concepts that don't require a traffic-filled trip downtown on Interstate 66. Suburbanites and visitors to this thriving region—as well as D.C. residents looking for a little escape from the city—now have a host of options when it comes to feeding their fix.

Chef Jacques Haeringer of L'Auberge Chez Francois in Great Falls, VA, draws inspiration from the bounty of the seasons.





Classic dishes like souffles are popular at L'Auberge Chez Francois.

JACQUES HAERINGER: L'AUBERGE CHEZ FRANÇOIS, GREAT FALLS

Launched in 1976 by renowned chef Jacques Haeringer's father, iconic Alsatian restaurant L'Auberge Chez François possesses a staying power Haeringer attributes to "value, top ingredients, and top service." "For the money, it's worth it," he says. Utilizing ingredients sourced from more than 40 farms, the chef de cuisine's cooking is inspired by the bounty of the seasons (he says he's inspired on a daily basis in his own garden to talk to the vegetables, which he jokes don't ask for days off).

Loyal patrons flock to Haeringer's dining room for his Dover sole, *choucroute* (Alsatian pickled cabbage), and Chateaubriand steak. No dish disliked by Haeringer will pass muster, but the ones that do are paired with the mostly French wine list. In addition to featuring several hundred bottlings and 25 by-the-glass selections, L'Auberge Chez François' beverage program offers Crémant cocktails like the L'Apéritif du Patron with Crémant d'Alsace, Framboise, and Chambord.

Over the course of 43 years in the business, Haeringer says he's witnessed exponential growth in the area. He doesn't buy into the concept of celebrity chefs, who he half-jokingly advises to "get over [themselves]": "We are here so folks can come in and enjoy themselves," he explains. "All in all, it's been a tremendous ride—we are still having a good time."



Jason Maddens says he launched his restaurant, AhSo, to fill what he saw as a gap in northern Virginia's dining scene.

JASON MADDENS: AHSO, BRAMBLETON

Loudoun County has no shortage of residents with money to spend on dining out, and as a native of the area, Jason Maddens wanted to fill what he saw as a gap in a restaurant scene brimming with chains and corporate-driven spots. "City-style, chef-owned and -operated places were few and far between," says Maddens, who has worked alongside renowned chefs like the late Michel Richard. "I wanted to give LoCo residents an option for upscale dining that didn't involve schlepping down to D.C."

Maddens opened his American bistro AhSo last December after previously serving as a founding partner of Clarity in nearby Vienna alongside Jon Krinn, who also appears on this list. At his new restaurant, the practice of sourcing from local farms means Maddens and his staff "let [the ingredients] tell [them] what's going to be on the menu," he says. The dishes change constantly, but mainstays include a braised pork shank cassoulet and a vegetarian take on spaghetti and meatballs.

Largely focused on lesser-known and regional producers, the wine list features 115 selections by the bottle and nearly 30 by the glass. The cocktail program, overseen by lead bartender Phil Duong, mirrors the kitchen's focus on seasonality, but the Orange You a Spicy One with vodka, blood orange puree, and lime-habanero syrup is a perpetual palate-pleaser.

Assessing northern Virginia's culinary prospects, Maddens believes the future is bright in his neck of the woods. "This area is poised to become a dining destination unto itself," he says.

The seared scallops are a popular first course at AhSo.



JON KRINN: CLARITY, VIENNA

After being forced to shutter his critically acclaimed restaurant INOX nine years ago in the throes of the recession, Jon Krinn spent a four-year stint in cybersecurity marketing. What he calls a “long, soul-searching journey” soon drew him back to his passion for cooking professionally, however, and in 2015 he made a comeback, naming his New American restaurant after what he believes we’re all looking for in life: Clarity.

Krinn, who also launched the successful 2941 Restaurant in Falls Church in 2002, revels in exploring innovative ideas at Clarity, which received the 2018 RAMMY Award for “Upscale Casual Restaurant of the Year” from the Restaurant Association of Metropolitan Washington. Adjusted daily, the menu combines French techniques with a globally minded philosophy for boundary-pushing dishes. The charred octopus with ginger glaze is inspired by Krinn’s wife’s Vietnamese cooking, and he’s also been known to make three soups a day (because, he says, “Who doesn’t love soup?”).

Fifty wines by the bottle and 15 by the glass represent the world’s classic regions, while the small cocktail list features a smattering of local products: The R-E-S-P-E-C-T Your Elders, for example, melds Catoctin Creek Organic Watershed Gin from Purcellville, Virginia, with elderberry mead, elderberry liqueur, citrus, agave, and thyme. “Clarity is a safe place to explore food and drink while we explore ourselves,” Krinn says.



▲ Jon Krinn says the dishes at Clarity are often inspired by his wife’s Vietnamese cooking.

◀ Krinn often churns out three soups a day at the restaurant.





PATRICK BAZIN: **BAZIN'S ON CHURCH, VIENNA**

While it's now common to see multiple gluten-free dishes on menus, chefs rarely do so out of necessity for their own health. When Patrick Bazin discovered five years ago he had celiac disease—a tough diagnosis for a native New Jerseyan whose longtime favorite food was pizza—he made adjustments both in his own lifestyle and at Bazin's, the contemporary American restaurant he opened in 2006.

In addition to hosting gluten-free pop-ups, Bazin ensures the majority of the options on his menu avoid gluten without sacrificing nostalgia (he says the restaurant specializes in “dishes that people miss,” among them pierogies, chicken-and-pesto pizza with onions, and broccoli frito with rice-flour batter). The maple- and miso-glazed Chilean sea bass is an ever-present favorite on the menu, and guests also swoon for his crab cakes wrapped into fried spring rolls. “It's a very exciting time for chefs,” he says. “We have five vegetable preparations on the menu—when I opened there were only salads.”

Offering 350 options by the bottle and 30 by the glass, Bazin curates one of the area's largest wine lists and trains staff through weekly tastings. He says he's proud and supportive of his chef colleagues who left the D.C. dining scene to set up shop in Vienna: “We are building our own scene,” he adds. ■■



▲ Patrick Bazin of Bazin's on Church changed his culinary philosophy when he was diagnosed with celiac disease.

▶ Miso-glazed sea bass is a signature entree at Bazin's on Church.