



PERRY STREET BRASSERIE

BY RICH BELMONT

Tri-State Foodies are well aware there has been a true gourmet fine dining establishment in Galena, IL for the past seventeen years. These Foodies know Perry Street Brasserie consistently exceeds their expectations for exquisite, expertly prepared cuisine, impeccable service, and casual elegance. So much so they once voted this eatery the best restaurant in Illinois. It has been the Open Table Diner's Choice Winner every year since 2010 and listed twice in the Top 100 Restaurants in the U.S.

If you believe eating out is entertainment and fine dining is one of the great joys of life then I urge you to dine at Perry Street Brasserie as often as you can during the next six months. The owners of this gustatory temple of delight are retiring and will close on December 31, 2016.



Executive Chef Stephen and his wife Renée Dowe (he says his name is pronounced like Dow Jones only without the money) have had a long and storied career in the hospitality business.

Chef Steve grew up in Weymouth a seaside town in Dorset England at the mouth of the River Wey on the English Channel coast. He started cook's training in the Culinary Department of the College of Weymouth. He graduated on July 4, 1969 and began an apprenticeship at Ye Old Felbridge Hotel. After working in the galley of a cruise ship on River Thames he returned to the Felbridge as Sous Chef.

He left England to further his culinary skills on Saint Lucia, Windward Islands. He was Executive Sous Chef at Halcyon Days Hotel which is now the Coconut Bay & Resort. (Fun Fact: In Greek mythology Halcyon Days are days of peace and tranquility).

While in Saint Lucia he met Renée, his American future bride. He then traveled to UAE (United Arab Emirates) to study the cuisine of the Gulf States.

His next stop was Hollywood, FL where he married Renée. He became Chef at the Island Club at Innisbrook Resort in Tarpon Springs and was soon promoted to Executive Sous Chef in charge of 27 banquet rooms.

In the succeeding years he would be Executive Chef at the Peter Island Yacht Club on Peter Island, B.V.I.; Kiawah Island Golf Resort in South Carolina; Hawk's Cay Resort in the Florida Keys; and Ford's Colony Country Club in Williamsburg, VA. He moved to Galena after accepting the Food & Beverage Director position at Eagle Ridge Resort & Spa where he remained for 4 years. Finally, he opened Perry Street Brasserie in 1999.

Renée is from Hillside, NJ. She graduated from Upsala College, East Orange, NJ where she majored in French. She did her junior year at the New York University in Paris. After graduation she became the only single French speaking docent for a tour company in Fort Lauderdale. She was transferred to Saint Lucia where she met Steve and as they say, the rest is history.

During their travels Chef Steve has been invited to cook for the Beatles, British Royalty, Arabian Oil Sheiks, Hollywood celebrities and famous sports personalities. He is listed in Best Chefs **America.com** a compendium of the top culinary talent in the US.

Perry Street Brasserie is so named because its entrance is on Perry Street but more importantly because of the Medieval Brasses on display. From approximately 1277 to 1700 brasses were made as memorials to be used on pictorial tombstones. While famous kings, queens, nobles and politicians were recorded in art, literature and architecture monumental brasses were commissioned to remember ordinary citizens of the middle classes.



The art of English brass engraving spanned a period of 430 years and it has been estimated approximately 100,000 brasses were produced. Today there are less than 7,500 of these brasses still in existence. So in 1972 the Church of England

in conjunction with the Monumental Brass Society authorized the reproduction of a limited number of them. The reproductions are called facsimiles (fak-sim-eh-lees). Stephen and Renée Dowe own the fifth largest collection of brass facsimiles in the world.



I urge you to take the time to check out these brasses. The detail in the engravings is extraordinary. For example there is one of Margarete Scorney. She was the Abbess or Mother Superior of a convent and is being introduced to the Blessed Virgin Mary and Baby Jesus by Saint Anne, Mary's mother. The dragon signifies the devil who is trying to interfere. All of the animals in the world are witnessing the introduction: The birds are represented by an eagle, the wild animals by a lion and the domestic animals by a water buffalo.



While you are examining these brasses may I suggest you try one of the unique Specialty Cocktails? Steve and Renée's son, Matthew, is the Front of the House Manager and expert mixologist. He makes all his own simple syrups and sours

and is constantly experimenting with new libations. He does wonders with liquors like Plum Kentucky Bourbon and Black Raspberry Chambord. Here are just a few of his unique concoctions:

Cherry Limeade Cocktail – Tequila with fresh Bing cherries and limeade

Mango Fling – Vodka with pineapple juice, mango purée, a slice of lime and a splash of champagne

Pomegranate Cosmo – Vodka, pomegranate juice, Cointreau and a splash of house sour with a twist

While you are enjoying your cocktails you might want to review the excellent wine list. The Chef has selected an interesting assortment specifically chosen to pair well with his entrées including some of his favorites like 2014 Pouille Fuisse, Bouchard Pere & Fils Burgundy and 2012 Amapola Creek Zinfandel by Richard Arrowood.

And when you order your entrée may I suggest you ask for a bottle of Smeraldina Sparkling Artesian Water, product of Sardinia, Italy. Carbonated water is a great digestive aid while enjoying a truly scrumptious meal.

Chef Dowe changes the menu monthly in order to take advantage of fresh seasonal ingredients. All entrées are accompanied by your choice of soup or salad. The current salad is mixed organic lettuces with fresh vegetables and a Vidalia onion dressing since Vidalia onions are in season. There are seven other house dressings available as well.

The soup is Wild Mushroom broth with herb crepes and Asiago. This broth is prepared according to an Italian recipe given to Steve from Renee's great aunt who lives in Abruzzo (ah-BROOT-zo), Italy. It is a time consuming and laborious work of art. First a veal stock is prepared from 4 pounds of veal bones simmered for 8 hours. Then a pound of vegetables (carrots, onions, leeks and celery) is cooked in olive oil, added to the stock and simmered for another 2 hours. After the first hour the peelings and stems of Portobello, shitake and oyster mushrooms are added with special seasoning.

It would be a mistake to skip the appetizers in this restaurant as they are all culinary masterpieces. Here are a few examples:



Maryland Style Crab Cakes – a fresh mayonnaise is made from egg yolks, Dijon mustard, key lime juice, olive oil, canola oil and spices. Worcestershire sauce and Melinda's hot sauce are mixed in with Chesapeake Bay Blue Fin Crab white meat. Cakes are formed and coated with bread crumbs and fried in hot olive oil

Hummus – puréed garbanzo beans blended with crushed garlic, tahini paste, key lime juice, olive oil and Melinda's hot sauce

Smoke Salmon & Trout – cold smoked Atlantic salmon from Scotland and smoked Trout with shallot and caper vinaigrette

The most popular entrée isn't even on the menu. It is called the Lobster, Shrimp & Scallops Saint Lucia. The meat from a lobster tail is removed from the shell. The shrimp are peeled, deveined and the tails are removed. Only pure chemical free Chesapeake Bay scallops are used. All the shellfish is cooked in olive oil, chopped garlic, dry white wine, Major Grey's Mango Chutney, Thai coconut milk, Melinda's Hot Sauce and seasonings. This dish is called the Saint Lucia in honor of the Island where Steve and Renée first met. The island was discovered by Christopher Columbus on December 13th so he named it in honor of the Christian Martyr Saint Lucia. (Fun Fact: her name is pronounced LOO-shuh. My mother's name was Lucia too but in Italian it is pronounced Loo-CHEE-uh).



Seafood Ravioli is amazing. The seafood filling is made with salmon mousse from fresh salmon trimmings, seasonings, cream and

habanero sauce. Chunky chopped lobster and shrimp are then mixed into the mousse. This filling is then spooned into fresh pasta squares that are poached in white wine with chunks of lobster and split shrimp. Then the ravioli are briefly simmered in lobster sauce.



Foie Gras (Fwah-Grah) Stuffed Texas Quail – diced duck liver is seared with seasonings. It is mixed into a stuffing made with chopped onions, leeks and celery, white wine and bread crumbs. The Quail is then stuffed and wrapped in bacon, seasoned, cooked and served over thin sliced and fried chicken breast.



My favorite entrée is the Prime Veal Cutlets. In Chef Dowe's version of Veal Cordon Bleu veal top round is pounded thin and seasoned. Then it is sliced open and stuffed with prosciutto and a thick slice of English white cheddar. When ordered the veal is breaded, fried in olive oil, finished in the oven and served with a classic demi glaze sauce.

When you first sit down in this restaurant you might notice there are no salt and pepper shakers on the table. In the aforementioned descriptions you might also have noticed every menu item contained seasonings. One of the many reasons why this restaurant stands apart from all other restaurants is the extraordinary flavor profiles. These are created by the expert applications of special seasonings produced by Acroama Blends.

Acroama Blends is a company founded by Chef Dowe and his partner, Justin Penoyer, MS, L.Ac. They search the entire world to find the finest herbs and spices. The seasonings are carefully balanced blends of finest quality, 100% certified organic, free of GMO's (genetically modified organisms) fillers, flow agents, anti-caking agents, artificial colors or preservatives. There are six blends available: Northern European, Mediterranean, Mid-Eastern, Louisiana, Caribbean and Tex-Mex. Each blend is influenced by the region of the world where the herbs and spices used are most popular. By the way do you know the difference between herbs and spices? Herbs come from the leafy and green non-woody parts of plants. Spices are parts of the plants other than the leafy parts. These include roots, stems, bulbs, bark, seeds, flowers or fruits. (Fun Fact: some plants can be both an herb and a spice. One example is Coriandrum Sativum. The leaves are cilantro (herb) and the seeds are coriander (spice). Acroama Blends are available for purchase in the restaurant or from **AcroamaBlends.com**.

Remember how I said it is a mistake to pass up appetizers? Well so too with desserts! My favorite is simply called the Chocolate Cup. Chef Dowe melts bittersweet Swiss chocolate and then dips a small blown-up balloon into it. He refrigerates the balloon and when the chocolate hardens he removes the balloon. Meanwhile he makes a ganache from heavy cream, salt free butter and Swiss chocolate. The cup is filled with layers of chocolate ganache, bittersweet and white milk ganache and placed on top of homemade raspberry sauce.

There are other equally decadent desserts like Crème Brûlée, a Berries Cup and the enticing Banoffee. This last one is an English dessert pie made from bananas, cream and toffee or coffee and sometimes chocolate.

Perry Street Brasserie is very popular with locals and tourists so I recommend you make reservations either through their website or on **OpenTable.com**.

PERRY STREET BRASSERIE

124 N. COMMERCE ST. (ENTER ON PERRY STREET),
GALENA, IL 61036
815-777-3773 • PERRYSTREETBRASSERIE.COM

Hours: Tue–Sat: 5 PM–Close; Sun–Mon: Closed

Dining Style: Casual Fine Dining

Noise Level: Quiet

Recommendations: Specialty Cocktails; Maryland Style Crab Cakes; Hummus; Smoked Salmon & Smoked Trout; Cured Ham, Spiced Salami & Smoked Sausage; Yellowfin Tuna; Grilled Breast of Duckling; Seafood Ravioli, Fresh Arctic Salmon; Angus Ribeye Steak; Vegan Kaniwa Stuffed Portobello; Prime Veal Cutlets Stuffed with Prosciutto & English cheddar; Foie Gras Stuffed Texas Quail with Amish Chicken Paillard; Chocolate Cup; Banoffee Pie

Liquor Service: Full Bar—Specialty Cocktails, Exceptional Wine List

Prices: Appetizers: \$15–\$18; Entrées: \$29–\$39

Pay Options: Cash, Checks, Debit, All Credit Cards

Accessibility: One step to side door

Kids Policy: Menu – No Highchair – No Booster

Reservations: Highly recommended and preferred

Catering: Yes—On and off Premises

Take Out: Yes • **Delivery:** No • **Parking:** On Street