

SAVING GRACE

HOTELS & INNS A RESTORATION DRIVE IN MILFORD, PENNSYLVANIA, RETURNS A SPECTRAL FRENCH HOTEL TO FULL-THROTTLE LIFE. EDITOR-IN-CHIEF MICHAEL BATTERBERRY CONDUCTS A CULINARY SEANCE. CHEF AND FOOD PHOTOS BY STEVE LEGATO.





There were still only 24 stars spangling Old Glory when chef Louis Fauchère was born into a family of French speaking hotel keepers in a Swiss canton close to the Italian border. This was 1823, only a few years before two brothers named Delmonico, natives of the same pocket of Switzerland, would commence to make radiant American history.

Cofounder of the United States' most illustrious restaurant and catering dynasty, John Delmonico first crossed the Atlantic to captain a three masted trade schooner plying routes between Havana, the West Indies, and New York. After investing in a profitable wine shop in booming lower Manhattan, he jumped vocational ship and persuaded his brother Peter, a talented confectioner, to leave Switzerland and join him in a Wall Street area venture dispensing coffee, chocolate, pâtés, pastries, liqueurs, and "confectionary of all sorts" (a format earlier introduced by pastry chefs fleeing the French Revolution). Two years later, some French hot dishes were added to the menu, served at six communal pine tables by one of the brothers, immaculate in long white apron and paper *toque blanche*. The

Hotel Fauchère's new sign bears the birth date of its earliest French predecessor. The hotel's born-again interiors apply modern minimalism to heirloom lyricism. The farm scene reflects chef Michael Glatz's commitment to fresh regional produce.



Clockwise from top left: A collection of framed historic menus raises the gastronomic pulse of the new Delmonico Room; chef Gratz's scholarly take on the 19th century classic "Delmonico Steak and Potatoes;" the tree embowered Hotel Fauchère before the Pocanos' loss of lustre.

titillating installation of a lady cashier, the first in the U.S., helped seal their success.

After the initial premises went up in smoke in the Great Fire of 1836, the undaunted Delmonico team, bolstered by four imported Swiss nephews, erected patrician new quarters a few blocks away, the entrance famously flanked by a pair of authentic Pompeian columns. With its menu now swollen to 346 entries in French and English (among them 40 hors d'oeuvres, 48 fish *spécialités*, 24 beef variations, 20 roasts, 58 wines, 28 liqueurs, and onslaughts of soups, *entremets* side dishes, game, poultry—including pâté de foie gras translated as "goose liver pie of Strasburg"—plus a dazzle of pastries and desserts), the new Delmonico's represented the nation's first grand scale Parisian-style French "restaurant."

Enter Louis Fauchère, by now an experienced chef trained in polished Swiss hotels, who, with his Swiss wife and little girl, had made his way to New York in 1851. Unconfirmed reports suggest he'd made contact with the Delmonicos before departing. Whatever the case, his culinary prowess was distinctly welcome in their hard-pressed back of the house.

Among the dishes destined to make world debuts on Delmonico's tables were lobster Newberg, a dish of Caribbean origin cooked tableside with rum, cream, and cayenne in a chafing dish; Baked Alaska, to mark the snow lathered outpost's reclassification as an official U.S. territory; a cut of boneless rib eye proprietarily designated "Delmonico steak"; mellow potatoes Delmonico, layered in a gratin with cream, cheese, and scraped nutmeg; chicken à la king; eggs Benedict; and, reputedly, the first ground beef patty borne to table as a sandwich, possibly fingering the Delmonicos as the parental burger kings.

With such an elephantine repertoire to keep in motion, small wonder that Fauchère, presiding in the kitchen as a master chef, by the 1860s was ready to gather up his wife and daughter and head for Pennsylvania's tranquil Poconos, already familiar to him from woodsy R&R trips with his friends the Delmonicos. There, in the Delaware River Highlands, he purchased a working property called The French Hotel that had been built by a relative of his wife in the town of Milford, long ago described as "the prettiest country seat in America" by *Atlantic* magazine. While his wonderful food struck locals and sojourners alike as a revelation, his loud kitchen histrionics earned him an indelible sobriquet, "the crazy Frenchman."

Like the Delmonicos, Fauchère was prone to the Bigger Dream, a furious itch that drove him to move the building to the back of his property, replacing it with a more graceful and roomy Victorian edifice, Italianate in style, and emblazoned "The Fauchère," outfitted with marble foyer, glassed-in dining room, and a gentleman's oyster bar in the basement later renamed The Chicken and the Snail. Under family ownership the hotel thrived for 125 years, its clientele mirroring the Delmonican presidential, plutocratic, and artistically virtuosic gold standard. ➤



Art attack: Down below in Bar Louis, which has a separate entrance, an equivocal Warhol/Lennon encounter photographed by artist Christopher Makos releases waves of pop era cool.

Along with so many other American sylvan escapes whose popularity predated air conditioning, fast lane interstates, affordable air travel, and failing small town economies, the Poconos' bosky allure, post-World War II, precipitously staled. Increasingly, the region grew emblematic of cut-rate honeymoon suitelets enlivened with heart-shaped bathtubs and spicy weekend getaways not of a culinary nature.

No longer a restful haven for presidents and statesmen, nor for stars of stage and screen (the silent film era first took wing not in Hollywood but in the area bracketed by the Delaware and Hudson Rivers, where the heroine-dangling palisades provided the sets, and the name, for serial "cliff hangers"), the Fauchère limped to a close in 1976, ironically the year of the nation's Bicentennial celebrations.

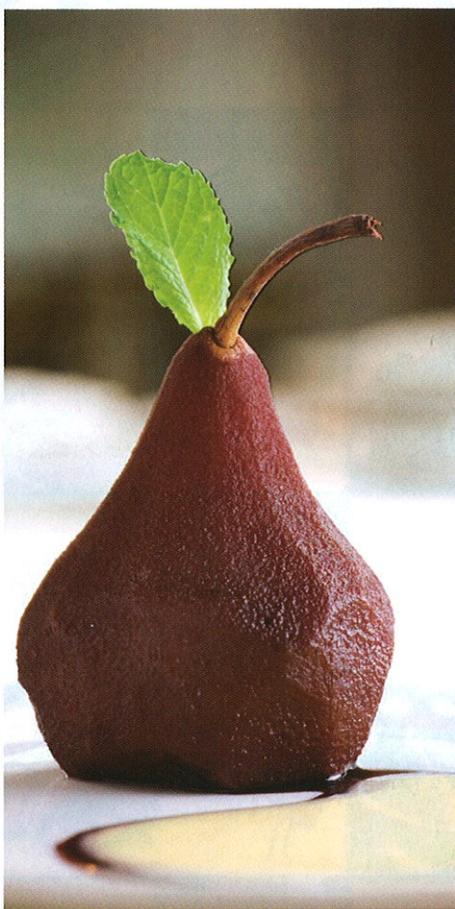
Converted into a sad warren of backwater offices, the structure continued to deteriorate for 25 years, at which point white knight salvation appeared in the felicitously funded persons of Milford businessmen **Sean Straub**, a successful publisher of special interest and trade magazines, and his financial partner, **Richard Snyder**.

They had first met a decade before on joining the Milford Enhancement Committee, a community effort "to improve streetscapes and parks, ripping up the blacktop and replacing it with Pennsylvania bluestone." Their shared vision has been to return the town and its environs to the state of grace known centuries before—physically, culturally, commercially. This has involved everything from renovating a number of historic buildings and a derelict lumberyard to launching the annual Black Bear Film Festival and Milford Music Festival, to creating, six years ago, the monthly microregional *Milford* magazine (subtitled "Navigating

the Delaware River Highlands") "to give the community an identity and a sense of pride in itself." Their crowning effort has been **Hotel Fauchère**, which finally reopened in July 2006.

Because the Fauchère is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the five year restoration project, an extremely taxing one, progressed at less a chicken's than a snail's pace, the new owners being forced to adhere to the U.S. Department of Interior's stringent guidelines. But the results were well worth it. Today, period authenticity, such as reclaimed marble and chestnut floors, mingles with the latest in 21st century boutique hotel luxury blandishments, on the order of flat panel televisions, high-speed wireless Internet access, iPod docking stations, and radiant heat in each of the 15 bedrooms' new marble and Pennsylvania bluestone floors.

Two menu options have been appealingly assembled by executive chef **Michael Glatz**, who recently returned to the U.S. mainland from John Delmonico's schooner day waters, where for 10 years he ran his own restaurant, Chef Michael's, on the island of Vieques off Puerto Rico. In The Delmonico Room, decorated with framed 1920s menus from storied European eateries, Glatz's prix-fixe three course dinner menu reflects a classic, no-nonsense Delmonican culinary philosophy that boils down, as he tells it, to "putting a great bird on a plate," most lately a roasted guinea hen with cipolline pan juices and wild mushroom *stagionato* risotto. Similarly forthright and deeply flavored are his first course frog's legs with garlic coulis and parsley jus in the signature style of Bernard Loiseau; fresh thyme scented onion soup under a cheese brioche croute; crown roast rack



Clockwise from top: Executive chef Michael Glatz; his ode to a perfect local pear, poached in bay, peppercorn, and cinnamon-scented red wine, stuffed with mascarpone, and pooled in sauce anglaise; sunstruck breakfast settings await morning patrons.

of lamb with tarragon and smoked sea salt, Port/juniper reduction, and olive oil whipped potatoes; Bourbon vanilla crème brûlée and chocolate pâte with crème anglaise. Traces of Glatz's Caribbean experience can be detected in his grilled rib eye with mashed malanga root or, downstairs in **Bar Louis** (a total reconfiguration of the Chicken and the Snail, with its own outside entrance), where thinly sliced flash-fried malanga sprinkled with sea salt puts in regular "bar munchy" appearances.

Glatz's Bar Louis menu, pure catnip to the locals, who now also number contingents of émigré New York artists and designer anoraked second homers, tips its hat to the cellar sanctuary's earlier incarnation with a friendly priced (\$15) "The Chicken and the Snail," game hen coq au vin with escargots, as well as to friendly Swiss ghosts with either the \$40 Delmonico's steak and potatoes or \$10 prime Angus chuck burger with Vermont cheddar, grilled onion, and truffle fries. The sheep's milk cheese in a *frico* crowning baby greens salad with spiced pecans had been made last summer by the chef himself in New England; the spicy andouille teamed in soup with white beans and Swiss chard comes from Pennsylvania Amish country. And for \$25 you can linger over a Scotch and cheese tasting, with malt Scotch whisky in three different styles—"smooth sweeter," "rich spicy," "smoky peaty."

Andrew Carnegie and other assorted 19th century tycoons had happily checked into the Fauchère. Apparently its new owners hope to lure some of their hedge funded millennial counterparts, if a \$100 one-ounce pour of Louis XIII Cognac is any indication. And in this new era, where spending a lot of green now can go hand in hand with thinking green, nature craving urbanites should leap at the chance to score a hike and private waterfallside picnic, packed by the Fauchère kitchen and transported on llama back. Or, failing that, a fly casting tutorial on "The Private Mile," an exclusive stretch along a class A trout fishing stream. Or, a special eagle-watching foray in conjunction with the Pike County eagle institute, all of this only 75 miles from Manhattan. And to think they called Fauchère crazy. ■

FOOD ARTS

On the cover: Taylor Grocery & Restaurant, the iconic catfish temple deep in Faulkner country outside of Oxford, Mississippi, draws politicians and poets, celebrities and civilians, and legions of Ole Miss football fans. See page 54. Photo by Phillip Parker.



Vol. 20, No. 5

June 2007



60

78



Burning issues

- 47 **Going with the Flow**
Cocktail consultant shakes up the country
- 49 **A Bill Arrives. Who'll Pay?**
How farm legislation affects chefs and restaurateurs
- 54 **Southern Exposure**
Food folkways take center stage at SFA's symposia
- 60 **Hotter 'Lanta**
Faster than summer lightning, restaurants are opening in the South's biggest city
- 66 **Blast on the Beach**
Wining, dining, and book signing in South Beach
- 73 **Seafood Sovereigns**
A tribute to the restaurant that changed the way Americans eat fish
- 78 **Saving Grace**
Culinary ghosts help bring fresh life to a reclaimed Pennsylvania hotel
- 85 **Run for Cover**
Cloths make the table, and the restaurant
- 87 **My Favorite Gear**
What it takes to cook Southern
- 93 **Ye Olde Gadgets**
Time-savers of yesteryear
- 95 **A Far Cry from Kitty Hawk**
All-frills airlines take off
- 98 **As American as Rice**
From sushi to risotto, the grain's grown here