

Chef Marc Collins and Circa 1886 is Jewel in Charleston, SC's Crown

Nestled on the property of The Wentworth Mansion in Charleston, South Carolina is the 5 star restaurant *Circa 1886*. Francis Rodgers and his wife Mary built the historic mansion in 1885. This is where they raised their 13 children. In 1997 Proprietor Richard Widman purchased the Wentworth Mansion and transformed it into a 'one of a kind' luxurious small city



Chef Marc Collins

hotel. It is a member of the Charming Inns group. The hotel with its 21 rooms has Italian crystal chandeliers, hand-carved marble fireplaces, in-laid floors, the original staircase, and Tiffany glass. It is within walking distance of the King Street shops and the antique district. Its attention to gracious hospitality has Travel and Leisure named it the #4 Small City Hotel in the US.

Amidst this grand hotel is its restaurant *Circa 1886*. It is located in the mansion's original carriage house. It too can boast of a top ranking in the US. The restaurant was voted #12 in the US by Trip Advisor's 2014 Traveler's Choice Awards. It also holds a Forbes Four Star Distinction, a AAA Four Diamond rating, and is consistently recognized by the Wine Enthusiast as one of America's Best Wine Restaurants. The Executive Chef/Owner is Marc Collins. Chef Marc focuses on Lowcountry dishes that reflect what the area is known for. However, with his training and creativity he transforms Lowcountry dishes into exquisite, comfortable, and modern dishes. They are healthful with bold flavors with less butter and cream typical of

Southern cooking.

Chef Marc is from Pennsylvania and studied at the Pennsylvania Culinary Institute. In high school he was required to take a technical class. His buddies asked him to join the culinary class. He states, "My friends said come join us all we do is cook and we get to eat! Everything was made from scratch and my teacher told

me I had a natural talent for cooking and that if I pursued it I could go far." That did not impress Chef Marc because he still wanted to be a fighter pilot! However, that never happened and his career led him back to the culinary arts. He came to *Circa 1886* in 2001 with a directive to make the hotel restaurant the place to go for Southern food. He states, "I have been here for 14 years and I love my job and I am not going anywhere!" His main goal is to keep the menu fresh with new and changing items. In keeping with local and fresh in this beautiful setting Chef Marc has his own herb garden.

Rice bread rolls are served and made in house daily. The butter often has a hint of flavor. The menu is unusual and creative. An interesting appetizer is the Antelope Goetta that is served with Artichoke Barigoule, Black Olive, Enoke Mushrooms, and White Balsamic Hollandaise. Other appetizers can include Carolina Gold Rice Risotto Chilled Shrimp and Grits, and local La Belle Farms Foie Gras. Wild boar is served as a main course it is Mesquite, Caramelized Bacon, a Quail Egg, Vermicelli, Carrots, Haricots Verts, and Basil and Ginger. There are several fresh

local seafood items all served with a creative flair. The beef is blackened, the lamb has a huckleberry influence, and the chicken is local with dumplings. The vegetarian dish is Asparagus with Morells, Egg Marble Potatoes, Leeks, Ramps, Apple, Parsley, and a Paprika Crepe. To finish off the meal several desserts are offered that include Pluff Mud Pie, Strawberry Shortcake, Pecan Pie Bread Pudding, and Pineapple Upside Down Cake.

The restaurant has an extensive wine list. The wine list includes 250 varieties. These wines are housed in the mansion's original wine cellar.

Chef Marc also plans creative events for *Circa 1886*. He has had some interesting dinner events like

a Blue Jean Beer Dinner. Again, he pairs his creative and inventive cuisine with local craft beers. Also, a Cocktail Supper teaming his cuisine with cocktails from the Classic Savoy Cocktail Book. There is a Wild Game Dinner and at the Holidays there is a Progressive Dinner where guest travel from one place to another by carriage. Chef Marc was also instrumental in starting the nationally acclaimed Charleston Wine + Food Festival. There is even an award presented every year in his name in honor of his work in founding the festival.

Charleston has many culinary choices. *Circa 1886* with Chef Marc Collins is certainly one of the jewels of this great city.

Filet of Striped Bass with Corned Beef, Field Peas, Pepper Trinity and Garnished with a Fried Green Tomato and Pickled Okra Tartar Sauce

Broth:

- 1/2# fish bones
- 2c. Diced Mire poix (equal parts carrots, onions, celery)
- 1c. White wine
- 2ea. Bay leaves
- 1t. Smoked paprika

Place the mire poix, fish bones, white wine, bay leaves and paprika in a pot and cover with water. Bring to a light simmer and reduce by a 1/3. Strain through a coffee filter and adjust seasoning.

Pickled Okra Tartar Sauce:

- 3T. Mayonnaise
- 2ea. Diced pickled okra
- Dash of Cream of tartar

Take the mayonnaise and mix it with the diced okra and cream of tartar.

Fish:

- 1 (6oz.) Filet of Striped Bass
- 1/2c. Cooked field peas
- 2T. Diced Corned Beef
- 1 1/2T. Diced Peppers (yellow, red & green)
- 1T. Diced onion
- 1/2t. Chopped herbs (mix of chives, thyme, parsley)

Place a tablespoon of butter and olive oil in a pan over medium/high heat. Season your fish fillet lightly and place in the pan, flesh side down, once the

pan is hot. Sauté for 4-5 minutes or until lightly browned. Flip and continue to cook until medium well is achieved. This depends greatly on how thick your fillet is. In another sauté pan heat 1 teaspoon of olive oil over medium heat. Once hot add the onions and peppers and cook stirring for about a minute. Next add the corned beef, herbs, cooked field peas and 1/2 cup of the paprika broth. Cook this until hot.

Fried Green Tomato:

- 1 1/3 inch slice of Green Tomato
- 1/2c. Corn Meal
- 1/4c. Flour
- 1 1/2t. Old bay seasoning
- 1/2c. Buttermilk

Mix the cornmeal, flour and old bay seasoning together. Dip your slice of tomato into the buttermilk and then into the cornmeal mixture making sure to cover it completely. You will be frying the tomato in oil at a temperature of 350°F. Fry your green tomato until golden.

Plate Up:

Place in a bowl the field/pea broth mixture and place the fish atop this. Add the Fried Green Tomato garnished with a dollop of Okra Tartar Sauce. Garnish with micro celery, pickled okra, and smoked paprika.