The Mick

As I parked my car and walked toward the entrance of The Mick Brassiere, I could feel the energy coming from the patio – I smiled at the delightful yet unassuming welcome. It gave me a little skip in my step too, like the one I get on my last day of work before going on vacation. Inside, I noticed delicate white tealights hanging gracefully from the ceiling accompanied by an enormous photo, of a long, scenic road, on the entire back wall. I felt empowered to indulge in the pleasures of their French-inspired cuisine in an elegant yet exploratory fashion.

With a glance, you become witness to the many places that influenced what is, The Mick. The photographs, eloquent tapas, open-air vibe, and seats full of food wanderers sharing their unique palates, capture much of the journey that led to the existence of the place.

Owners, John Krause and, Chef Brent Menke, both grew up in Arizona but, met when they became fraternity brothers at the University of Arizona. After graduation, Krause and Menke went about their own individual lives to later, reconnect on Facebook. Menke spent years enveloped in the culinary world working on yachts, jets, and in villas worldwide. Krause was involved in several business ventures including high purity water systems.

When Krause’s daughter wanted to give the gift of a cooking class to her grandfather, Krause reached out to Menke for advice. “I figured he would know someone that could help but, he insisted to do the class himself”, said Krause. I understand there is a bond in brotherhoods such as these that encompasses a feeling of trust and pride that never goes away. They soon realized they both lived and worked on yachts in Rhode Island in different capacities, at separate times in their lives. Yacht life taught them organization, discipline, and the importance of the personal touch.

In many ways, The Mick Brassiere is the story of Krause and Menke as it was created from their private adventures and experiences. Krause was at a time in his life when he was ready to do something for himself, that he truly wanted to do. Menke was caring for his father, back in Arizona after a year of an educational, global jaunt with his family. When Krause approached Menke about a restaurant concept it took some convincing. “I begged Brent for about 4 months to do this”, said Krause. During this time, they were both considering new opportunities. “I tried to warn him”, Menke laughed.

I am not sure if either gentleman believes in “Hope”, the state motto of Rhode Island, or, that “*Ditat Deus*” {God Enriches}, the state motto of Arizona, but together they knew they could do something incredibly special. It may have been the kindred spirit of their yacht days and the strong work ethic that comes with it, possibly their brotherly respect, or maybe their common appreciation for culture and flair for great food – whatever the reason, the concept is now a reality.

Restaurant life doesn’t exactly say simple life, but they built The Mick so that it feels cool, calm, and collective. Who cares if they opened in the middle of the pandemic, during the hottest summer in years? “Our model was designed to handle COVID before we even knew what COVID was. Minimal overhead and staff, and a clean, safe, and small kitchen”, said Krause. The kitchen at The Mick is tiny but mighty and everything is based on their prep work. This is a kitchen without a grill or a flat top, no gas, and no heavy frying. The oven technology they use to cook each dish is programmed to produce the exact meal, made the same way, every time. It is consistent, efficient, there are no fires, less use of chemicals, and easy cleanup. They also do some curing and smoking of meats and use a fair amount of the sous vide cooking method.

The food at The Mick is tapas style – not limited to Spanish cuisine as the name {tapas} might suggest - but small eclectic savory dishes. “We designed a grazing menu so people would order their way through it. When you’re full, you’re done. Order something new next time”, said Krause. Small plates give patrons options, without taking away how each dish is supposed to be prepared in the eyes of the chef. “We prefer small plates and, for customers to enjoy our recommendations. Please, trust me”, said Menke. The restaurant appeals to both those with a desire for casual fare and those with fine dining aspirations.

I had the pleasure of engaging in the 5-course Long Shadows Wine Dinner that was taking place that same evening I walked in. Somewhat of a loner, I have always been comfortable at a table for one – to a fault, I probably prefer it that way. Being a writer, I told Krause I’d just sit at the bar as to stay out of the way. Krause had none of it and, sat me at a table with three Long Shadows wine club members. They immediately took me in and, before I knew it, we were in the middle of a lovely conversation. Perhaps, following the Krause/Menke mantra, it was a reminder to always be open to new adventures. With that, I raise a glass to great food, wonderful wine, and, people that bring people together to enjoy it all in unison – to The Mick!