

# A Palatable Journey

## Le Canard Enchaîne Brasserie

Owner

Jean-Jacques Carquillat

**Success Magazine:** What is your definition of success?

**Jean-Jacques Carquillat:** To bring quality, creativity, and charisma to a project I can take great pride in owning.

**SM:** When did you discover your passion for the culinary arts?

**JJC:** I grew up in the French Alps and was raised in a kitchen. My grandmother's passion for food was the foremost contributing factor.

**SM:** Where did you begin your culinary journey?

**JJC:** My training truly began with my father, who owned Le Ratelier, a restaurant and club near my hometown. Then in 1975, when I was just 15 years old, I took an apprenticeship in Paris. From there, I got my first position in the esteemed Gaston Le Notre De Paris, as an assistant to the pastry chef. I then went on to travel the world, working in such renowned restaurants as Fauchon of Paris, Le Richmonde in Geneva, Le Mirabelle of London, and the Ritz Carlton of Portugal. In 1985, I received a phone call from the Reserve of New York that would change my life forever. They paid all of my expenses to move to New York City to fill a one year position as the Pastry Chef and Sous Chef de Cuisine. The rest, as they say, is history.

**SM:** How and why did you end up in Kingston, New York?

**JJC:** On several ski trips to Belair, I fell in love with the architecture and quaintness of

uptown Kingston and felt my concept for a French Bistro was sorely needed.

**SM:** You opened Le Canard Enchaîne in Kingston back in 1995. What was your vision for this establishment?

**JJC:** To become successful and to have Le Canard recognized as one of the finest restaurants in New York.

**SM:** You were extremely successful in this venture, receiving many awards and accolades. To what do you attribute this success?

**JJC:** To mine and Jennifer's (my lovely wife) dedication and hard work, along with a love for people and food, and surrounding myself with a top quality staff that shares my vision.

**SM:** More than a decade later, you have opened Le Canard Enchaîne Brasserie, right here in the Capital Region. What motivated this decision, and how did you choose your new location?

**JJC:** I felt it was time to expand my concept, and the proximity of Albany lent itself to that goal.

**SM:** What has been the biggest challenge you have faced so far in this start-up phase?

**JJC:** Opening any business is challenging. Given the economic climate of today, it has been a delicate balance to provide the type of value I believe you must give while maintaining such a high level of quality.

**SM:** Taking over the former Nicole's, a popular local French restaurant, how did you ensure that you would set yourself apart from the previous owner?

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**JJC:** Nicole did a great job here for years and my hat goes off to her. I came in with my own vision. We changed the interior, renovating what we had and adding my personality to the restaurant, and hired chef David Gibson, who is wonderful. I think that by doing these things, our changeover has been a success.

**SM:** What can a customer expect from their experience at Le Canard Enchaîne Brasserie?

**JJC:** They can expect the best service, food quality, and fine dining experience as if they were in Paris, New York, or wherever their most enjoyable evenings have been spent. As the New York Times said, "Lift a fork and imagine you're in Paris."

**SM:** What do you plan for the future of Le Canard Enchaîne Brasserie?

**JJC:** Right now we are building a reputation, and that takes time. I hope to expand my vision to other cities, as I feel ready, without taking away from the two restaurants I am already very proud of.

# Lori's Picks

Restaurant Reviews

## Le Canard Enchaîne Brasserie

25 Quackenbush Square · Albany, N. Y. · 518 465-1111



Let me begin by saying that the former Nicole's Bistro was one of my favorite spots to dine. When I heard they sold, I was intrigued to see what the new owner's plans would be. After a lovely evening of dining at the new Le Canard Enchaîne Brasserie, I must say, I was pleasantly surprised

The ambiance at Le Canard Enchaîne Brasserie appeals to every sense. The dining rooms have a distinctly more contemporary, sleek and, if I dare say, hip décor, with modern light sconces and vibrant turquoise walls tastefully decorated with all things French. Le Canard Enchaîne Brasserie definitely captures a certain sophistication, and yet maintains a comfortable and relaxed feel.

The menu is 100% French, and the price point is a bit more reasonable than the former Nicole's. In fact, they offer a two course lunch, Monday- Friday for \$12.00 a person. That is an incredible value by any standards.

I knew I wanted something warm and satisfying to start, and the French onion soup seemed like the perfect choice. Smothered in Gruyere cheese and chock-full of onions and French bread, it certainly quenched my craving. My companion selected the Napoleon of vegetables—roasted red peppers, eggplant, and portabella mushrooms in a basil coulis. The dish is served cold, exemplifying the phrase "light and refreshing." I would have loved it on a warm summer's night, but my companion did not mind the chill of the dish, and relished the combination of fresh vegetable flavors. The basil coulis was a pleasing complement—sweet, earthy, and fresh.

We both decided on specials of the evening for our entrees. I opted for the four ounce filet mignon, sandwiched with tomato and onion, served on a bed of mashed potatoes and dressed in a green peppercorn sauce. My companion decided on the rack of lamb prepared in a balsamic red wine reduction. My filet was cooked to a mouthwatering medium—succulent and delicious. The rack of lamb was an impressive eight ribs—not the customary six—and was a standout.

We ended our meal by sharing a wonderful piece of warm apple tatin, accompanied by two cups of decaffeinated coffee—a wonderful combination on a cold winter's night. The coffee was among the finest in the area, with a velvety smooth rich flavor. We were every bit as impressed at the end of the meal as we were when we first walked into this chic new dining hot spot.

I am more than pleased to say that my old haunt is undoubtedly in wonderful hands. Plan a lunch or dinner at Le Canard Enchaîne Brasserie, and experience the exquisite tastes of France right here in the Capital District!



**Le Canard**

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**ENCHAINÉ BRASSERIE**

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**Here's what the experts say about Le Canard Enchaîné:**

*"Best cassoulet, best lunch, best onion soup, best piano bar, best French bistro..."* - Hudson Valley Magazine

*"Lift a fork, imagine you're in Paris"* - New York Times

*"Best French restaurant north of Manhattan...best saucier on earth"* - Zagat

*"Le Canard takes no shortcuts with their cooking"* - Pougkeepsie Journal

*"...wonderful wine cellar and wine list"* - Wine Connoisseur Magazine

*"...you will fall in love"* - Kingston Freeman