

# suburban life

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# Passion *and* Purpose



Driven by heart, integrity, and a commitment to using local and seasonal ingredients, **Verbena BYOB's Scott Morozin** enjoys taking diners on a culinary adventure.

by LEIGH STUART | photography by NINA LEA PHOTOGRAPHY

**Scott Morozin has accomplished a lot since bursting onto the culinary scene as a 24-year-old alum of the world-renowned Culinary Institute of America.** His talents took him into some of the finest kitchens in Philadelphia—Gayle, MidAtlantic, Rae, and R2L, to name a few.

Ever the independent spirit, Morozin dreamt of helming an establishment of his own where he could cook the food that inspires him every day. As the universe often does for individuals courageous enough to pursue their dreams, a fortuitous opportunity presented itself to Morozin. He leapt at the chance, which landed him in the community of Kennett Square.

“A person contacted me after seeing something I posted on social media and said, ‘Do you want to buy a restaurant?’” he says. “I drove here and didn’t ask a lot of questions. If I thought about it for two more seconds, I probably wouldn’t have done it, but I’m so glad I did. It became an easy decision. Fear is paralyzing. If you’re afraid to just go, just move forward, then you never will. You have to be willing to have unknown challenges in order to move forward.”

He arrived in Kennett Square “with a purpose, not just a plan.” He opened the doors to his restaurant, Verbena BYOB, on Valentine’s Day 2018.

“This is a passion-driven industry,” he says. “I chose to go in on my days off just to spend time in the kitchen, learning about the industry.”





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—Scott Morozin, *Verbena BYOB*

I didn't just clock out and go home. I've spent my life in restaurants because I wanted to—I chose that.”

The menu at Verbena reflects Morozin's love of fresh, seasonal ingredients, but he says it's not just a “passion project.” Rather, it's a “way of life.”

“I want the people around me to succeed,” he says. “We need this restaurant as much as we want it. Verbena has become a staple in Kennett Square. ... This town is full of talented people—people with creativity, people with drive, and people with character. Good people doing good things. Business relationships and personal connections alike are done with smiles here. I can attest that that isn't always the case, but it is here.”

Morozin's investment in the community reaches into the relationships he maintains with diners and local vendors alike.

“If a local producer brings me fiddlehead ferns, I know I have to put them on a plate somewhere,” he says. “It's a moral responsibility. If I didn't, the culinary gods would remind me, and my oven would go out for three

days. If you don't pay homage and give back, you're going to fail.”

Integrity is a pillar of Morozin's life and business philosophy. He prizes the same quality in team members.

“My staff is dedicated and professional,” he says. “They take care of Verbena and I take care of them. We use high-end ingredients often alongside locally grown or locally sourced products. I'd rather myself and my staff purchase from small businesses in town rather than purchase from the uber big corporations. I'd rather see a small company grow because they have underlying support from other business owners, which at Verbena they have.

“For the past four years we have supported this town, internally and externally, not for recognition, but because we have a deep belief that spending money locally keeps local economies thriving,” he continues. “I would love to see the small businesses become ‘the next big thing.’ I want to see the farms, farmers, and local supply chains be able to rest without worry throughout the winter. And I want to cook their plants, fruits, and vegetables so they can.”

Having established a foundation of trust

with every link in the chain—teammates, guests, suppliers, etc.—Morozin gets to run his restaurant as any chef would dream. He offers unique menus each day according to seasonality and whatever might inspire him.

Truly, guests who dine at the restaurant are guaranteed a culinary adventure, with sample menu items traversing courses from amuse bouche through dessert. One day, a diner might enjoy slow-roasted pork loin with kabocha squash and bok choy, followed by a locally sourced braised duck leg with sofrito and pistachio. The next day, the same customers will enjoy something wholly different.

Takeout diners can experience the same thrill at home by ordering a selection that will include a first course, an entrée, and a sweet dish to finish. Of course, Morozin takes care to honor the requests of diners with unique needs, such as food allergies or gluten intolerance.

“I don't want a guest to have to make a decision,” he says. “I don't want a guest to have to do anything but eat.”

While menus are constantly evolving, Morozin says he looks forward to utilizing ingredients coming into season for summer. Some personal favorites include asparagus, strawberries, ramps, morel mushrooms, and softshell crabs.

“There is no publicly announced ‘end goal’ for Verbena,” he says. “I want to take this as far as I can in regard to positive publicity, culinary awards, and sold-out nights for the remainder of its lifespan. I want this restaurant to become a culinary landmark, and myself and everyone around me is willing to take it there. We know how good we are, and we know what we want to do to take Verbena to its next natural step up.” ■



## **VERBENA BYOB**

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