

suburban life

Take a break from the hectic pace of the holidays with soul-warming food and drink at New Hope favorite **Bowman's Tavern.**

page 14

+ **Also Inside:**
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Bowman's Holiday

Take a break from the hectic pace of the holidays with soul-warming food and drink at New Hope favorite Bowman's Tavern.

By **LEIGH STUART** | Photography by **ALISON DUNLAP**



Rich Christiansen, newly appointed executive chef at Bowman's Tavern in New Hope, finds himself a long way from his native Los Angeles. He feels right at home in Bucks County.

Raised in the restaurant industry, Christiansen nurtured his passion for the culinary arts in his family's West Coast restaurant Fabrocini's Beverly Glen, where he worked his way from sous chef to head chef before moving farther up the coast for an opportunity in Seattle.

"I ended up working for Tom Douglas, who owns quite a number of restaurants up there," Christiansen shares. "It was a life-changing experience to be sous chef of Etta's, located in the world-famous Pike Place Market."

In 2020, the world changed for Christiansen and family—his wife and son, and their dog, Moose.

"With being quarantined," he says, "we realized we had to pick a coast to be by one of our parents."

They chose Bucks County to live closer to his wife's family in New Jersey. Christiansen hoped for an opportunity to work at an establishment that embodied the warmth and family-like atmosphere he had come to revere. When he met James Seward, owner of Bowman's Tavern, he knew he had found a new home, culinarily speaking. In addition to fostering the atmosphere he most craved, he found that Bowman's offered the bonus of being "tapped in" to the best nearby farms and creameries. Christiansen gained



Bowman's Tavern

1600 River Road
New Hope, PA 18938
(215) 862-2972

BowmansTavernRestaurant.com



Rich Christiansen,
executive chef
(seated), and
Matt Schotmiller,
sous chef

many old-school French dishes,” Schotmiller says. “People enjoy coming in and being able to make themselves at home, get that comfort food—that bite of home. We like to keep things local, simple, and with clean flavors on the plate that let things speak for themselves.”

Schotmiller and Christiansen both speak with palpable passion about the products they can work with at Bowman’s, thanks to partnerships with purveyors including Souderton-based Leidy’s, renowned for its pork products; produce, including rice and greens from Blue Moon Acres in Buckingham; top-quality dairy from Lambertville’s Fulper Family Farmstead, and more. As Christiansen says, “We try to use as many local products as often as we can.”

“With Rich [Christiansen], coming from the West Coast, he brings a little bit of a different point of view,” Schotmiller says. “He brings a nice outside per-

spective and we’re doing really well together.” In the months ahead, Christiansen says guests can expect to see “warm, comforting foods” on the Bowman’s menu, as well as dishes highlighting hearty root vegetables. Best-loved classics, of course, will always have a home on the menu, too.

“People seem to love the staples that we do,” says Schotmiller. “We do a meatloaf with potatoes mashed fresh daily, and people seem to enjoy that type of food. Pasta is popular, too; for example, we do a cavatappi with tomato cream and shrimp.

“We always make a soup of the day, and people really seem to enjoy the soups here,” he continues. “We’re always updating

with new soups. We’re always trying to express ourselves and our creativity, and we get to do that with the soup quite often.”

Daily special dishes also encourage creativity in the kitchen. One recent special featured pan-seared swordfish, served with smoked fennel frond, white bean puree, and a garnish of fried capers. “Even if something isn’t on the day-to-day menu, we’re trying to make it possible for people to come here and get a feel for the cool, creative things we’re doing,” Schotmiller says.

Likewise, Christiansen loves the opportunity Bowman’s affords to express his unique flair.

“I want to create dishes for the seasons and to suit the warm environment at Bowman’s, but also put little pieces of myself all over the menu,” says Christiansen, who brings nearly 25 years of culinary experience into the Bowman’s kitchen.

A favorite of both coasts are mussels, which star in a top Bowman’s appetizer alongside harissa and caramelized onion. “We get them in fresh consistently,” Schotmiller says. “We have a really great seafood provider. Plus, mussels are really sustainable—they’re kind of like the mushrooms of the sea.”

House-made desserts such as cheesecake and brownies are always available to end a meal on a sweet note.

“What I like about this place is it’s not black tie; there’s no fuss,” Schotmiller says. “It’s just straightforward, good food for an honest price for people who come here to have a good time.”

As for California native Christiansen, he looks to the holiday season ahead with a sense of gratitude and profound joy: “I’m looking forward to a busy winter, and I’m looking forward to the snow.” ■

an opportunity to explore his culinary imagination with the best of what Bucks County and surrounding areas have to offer.

Working beside Christiansen in the Bowman’s kitchen is sous chef Matt Schotmiller, who hails from a much nearer location—Newtown, to be exact. Whereas Christiansen honed his skills on the West Coast, Schotmiller earned his stripes in the kitchens of local favorites including Newtown’s La Stalla and The Brick Hotel. He then worked for the private-events venue The Fuge in Warminster, but has spent the last two years embracing his restaurant foundation at Bowman’s.

“The style here is American—not too