

# suburban life



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**The Second Story**, a one-of-a-kind event space and cocktail lounge from the owner of Bridget's Modern Steakhouse and KC's Alley, adds another chapter to Ambler's vibrant dining scene.

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# The Story Continues

**T**HOSE FAMILIAR WITH AMBLER ARE LIKELY NO STRANGER TO M2K RESTAURANT GROUP, helmed by restaurateur Kevin Clibanoff. If the name of the hospitality group does not ring a bell, its restaurants—KC’s Alley and neighboring Bridgets Modern Steakhouse—certainly will.

Clibanoff, who has been working in hospitality since his first job as a busboy in 1979, is somewhat of a pioneer among Ambler’s restaurateurs. He opened KC’s Alley back in 1999.

“In 1999, nobody came to Ambler,” he says. “You couldn’t get anybody to go there. I wanted to create something there. Ambler is surrounded by so much wealth—Lafayette Hill, Wissahickon, Plymouth Meeting—and I thought: *If we can get people to buy into this town, maybe we have something here.*”

“Little by little, things matriculated,” he continues, “and in 2004 I opened Bridgets. It’s not just because of me, but because of the culture here. More and more restaurants

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started opening, and more things started happening in Ambler, and it became what it is today. Today, everyone thinks Ambler is great, and it truly is.”

Locals have more reasons than ever to linger on Ambler’s shopping and dining corridor. M2K Restaurant Group recently

added a new jewel in its crown: The Second Story, a cocktail lounge and event space located just above Bridgets. Here, guests will enjoy a wholly different experience than in either of the larger restaurants, which focus on larger plates and more traditional dining.

At The Second Story, the focus is on providing an intimate and sophisticated lounge atmosphere with a menu of creative cocktails and small dishes. Clibanoff decided to build the lounge last year to accommodate untapped demand.

“I wanted to give people a space for private events,” he adds. “I’m trying to create something that the suburbs does not have—a lounge where people can enjoy music, watch the game, or just hang out.”

His original rooftop concept evolved into an enclosed space featuring scores of windows that can open to flood the space with fresh air and natural light. Guests can experience the benefits of alfresco dining in the warmer months, even on rainy days.



“We have accordion windows, so they open, sexy, chic blue velvet barstools, and white-and-black tile floors,” he shares. “I’ve never had an opportunity to have a space like this.”

The bar offers seating for 18, including two banquette couches, and the space in its entirety can accommodate up to 40 guests. It is open to the public on Friday and Saturday nights, but available for private bookings all other days.

“It’s a great space for wine dinners, birthday parties, happy hours,” Clibanoff adds. “Anything under 40 guests is a grand slam. It’s not your typical event space; it’s sexy.”

No cocktail lounge would be complete without a carefully curated selection of drinks and spirits, of course. Kevin’s daughter, Bridget Clibanoff, explains the selection is due in large part to General Manager Steve Britt, who Bridget describes as an aficionado of whiskeys and bourbons. Britt, who also serves as general manager for Bridget’s Modern Steakhouse and KC’s Alley, came to M2K Hospitality Group with a background in country club hospitality, as well as a penchant for fine spirits.

Visitors familiar with Bridget’s may recognize some of The Second Story’s signature cocktails borrowed from the menu of its sister establishment. These favorites include the “OG” Basil Cocktail, a medley of house-infused pineapple vodka, muddled fresh pineapple, basil, lemon, and pineapple juice. Another Instagrammable standout is the Lady Bridgerton.

“We use Empress 1908 gin, which is a fluorescent purple color, with house-made Earl Grey and lavender simple syrups,” Bridget says of the drink. “Every juice we use is freshly squeezed, like the lemon we use in this, and then we top the rim of the glass with egg white foam.”

Just as important as the beverage program is the selection of small plates. One star is the lobster risotto, made with fresh Maine lobster. Seafood shines across the menu in dishes such as the tuna duet, featuring spicy Ahi tuna tartare aside blackened tuna served with pickled ginger and spicy mustard; the crabcake, which comes accompanied by sweet chili sauce; and the fried calamari, which is a departure from the version most will know from other restaurants in the area.

“Ours is not an Italian preparation,” Bridget says. “It is cornmeal-crust and served with oatmeal clusters, bean sprouts, and sweet banana chips with a sweet chipotle glaze that has a little kick. It’s a crowd favorite, and there’s no marinara.”

Beef enthusiasts will enjoy two dishes in particular: the short rib dish with Kalbi glaze over Mexican corn salad; and the steak Tataki, an Asian preparation of rare-seared New York strip steak with crispy shallots and leeks and a side of ponzu sauce.

“Everyone wants to feel special,” Bridget says. “We want people to feel that way here, that’s why we wanted to do something more low-key, close, and comfortable. All different types of people want to come see us, including people who just want to have a good time and not spend a ton of money on food. I don’t think there are many places like this unless you go to the city.”

“I’m a passionate entrepreneur, and I love what I do,” Kevin Clibanoff adds. “When I first opened here, I was trying to create something unique for people. Most people thought I was crazy. With The Second Story, we’ve basically made an enclosed open-air lounge that people love. It’s a great location, and considering what’s happening in Ambler, and all the growth that’s going to happen here in the next five years, people are really going to take to it.” ■

“  
It’s not your  
typical event space.”

—Kevin Clibanoff,  
M2K Restaurant Group



→ **The Second Story**  
For more information on The Second Story, located above Bridget’s Modern Steakhouse in Ambler (8 West Butler Ave.), visit [bridgetssteak.com](http://bridgetssteak.com) or call (267) 465-2000.