



suburbanlife

WOMEN
CHANGING
THE WORLD
pg. 35

Freedom Village at Brandywine celebrates world-class dining with the promotion of Gilles Moret, an executive chef with international acclaim and a rich culinary background.

page 30

+ **Also Inside:**

Leading health systems, outdoor living, and more

French Revolution

Freedom Village at Brandywine celebrates world-class dining with the promotion of Gilles Moret, an executive chef with international acclaim and a rich culinary background.

by **LEIGH STUART** | photos by **JEFF ANDERSON**

Freedom Village at Brandywine has become known throughout Chester County as a haven for seniors who seek comfort, security, and apex care in their retirement years. The community recently added yet another feather to its proverbial cap: a world-class dining program helmed by Gilles Moret, a classically trained French chef with years of experience in the kitchens in some of the finest restaurants in Europe and the United States.

Having a chef of Moret's caliber should come as no surprise. At Freedom Village, residents can take advantage of any number of amenities, including group fitness and personal training classes, lifelong learning initiatives, arts workshops, and more than 50 clubs and interest groups. They also have access to an indoor heated pool, miles of walking paths, a library, and so much more.

Now, with Moret leading the kitchen, residents also have world-class dining.

"These people have been dining all over the world," he says. "They are a tough crowd. You can't fool them about food. ... The residents here have high expectations for their dining. We buy high-quality meats, and the same with vegetables. We roast fresh beets, for example. People invest in dining here, and my main goal is their satisfaction."

His goal is simple in nature, but not simple in execution: "To me, you've got to please people. That's why I got into cooking."

As executive chef, Moret has much to oversee, feeding 400 residents three meals a day. Yet, he says, "Cooking is my passion still." Menu planning is done directly in-house to accommodate diners who have dietary restrictions. It can be a challenge considering Freedom Village's varied living accommodations—independent living, personal care, memory care, skilled nursing, and rehabilitation—but Moret and his team have excelled at the task.

"People love to see different menus," he says. "We did a Seder not too long ago. It's just like when I was cooking in a restaurant. ... I was trained in French cuisine, but I also love Spanish and Italian. I love to play with flavors. One of my favorites is Indian food. We have also done Cinco de Mayo, and we have done Caribbean cuisine. The residents here enjoy cuisine from around the world."

Dining options abound, as do special themed nights. For example, Freedom Village runs a happy hour for residents, as well as wine events on Wednesdays and Fridays. A newly renovated bistro offering breakfast, lunch, and dinner provides casual dining

**To me, it's all about
pleasing the residents.**

The vision is to elevate
dining expectations."

—GILLES MORET, FREEDOM VILLAGE
AT BRANDYWINE



With Moret leading the kitchen, Freedom Village
residents have the opportunity to enjoy cuisine
from around the world.



options, and serves as an accompaniment to the five additional independent living dining rooms where Moret estimates the team serves more than 200 people dinner each day.

International Inspiration

Moret's culinary journey began more than 40 years ago. He considered a career in bartending at first—his parents said “no” to that—and pastry next. That wasn't a good fit either, it turns out. He started working with chocolates and found that he despised “the feeling of sugar on my hands.” Culinary school proved the best match, and he proceeded to study traditional French cooking in Meudon-la-Forêt.

He took his newly minted diploma to Paris, where he worked in some of the nation's finest eateries, including Hôtel de Crillon, a luxury hotel, for three years. After departing this Michelin-star establishment, he went on to excel in his native France but soon looked to spread his wings in a kitchen where he could have more room to flex his culinary creativity.

During his national duty service in France, Moret cooked for countless international delegations, as well as the chief of staff of the Armée de l'Air, or the French air force. He admits, “It was a tough life for me.” After completing his service, he came to the United States in 1985 to pursue culinary freedom, and did so with gusto. He landed in Baltimore and spent three years working in kitchens there before moving on to Washington, D.C., to work alongside renowned chef Pierre Chambrin.

Moret moved to Pennsylvania to work in restaurants such as La Verona Restaurant in Kennett Square and Mimosa in West Chester. Ultimately he opened his own restaurant, which he ran until 2009. After a lifetime of toiling in restaurant kitchens, Moret found himself longing for more—in particular, more time with his family; one job in Paris, he recalls, required him to work from 8 a.m. to 11:30 p.m.

He moved into health care dining about 14 years ago, and has enjoyed the balance it has brought back to his life. His post at Freedom Village allows him to showcase his culinary artistry to savvy diners who themselves have traveled and dined in locales across the globe.

At the end of the day, his goal as a chef—whether his audience is a resident or a restaurant guest—has always been the same: to deliver artful cuisine to a sophisticated diner.

“To me, it's all about pleasing the residents,” Moret says. “The vision is to elevate dining expectations. That's why we're here.” ■



Freedom Village at Brandywine

15 Freedom Blvd.
Coatesville, PA 19320
(610) 572-2017
fvbrandywine.com