There’s a sweet calm in Pineapple Grove these days, the smell of success is in the air. You can tell by the way new restaurants have opened up to much fanfare and fabulousness.

The newest kid on the block – in a culinary sense – is Banyan Restaurant & Bar. Owners Joseph LoRe and Miles Moriarty come from storied restaurant pasts (Moriarty’s family owned Minetta Tavern in NYC) and met when working at the Seagate Hotel. Chef James also has an illustrious past that includes Dada and the Seagate Hotel. When their creative forces are combined, this new colorful eclectic restaurant has an almost outer galactic feel. That is, if the galaxy specializes in homemade fresh food that combines flavor and substance to create a synergistic vibe.

It seems their mission has been accomplished. Everything is fresh – there’s no freezer on the premises. Instead you will find en-trees like Stout Braised Short Ribs with garlic mashed potatoes, seasonal vegetables and a stout reduction. According to Chef James this dish is braised for six hours in stout. You’ll taste its slow simmering pedigree the moment you bite into this sublime dish. The same goes for the Apple Cider Glazed Salmon with wild rice and seasonal vegetables.

To anchor all this serious culinary greatness comes side dishes that will make you hum with delight. Did you ever hear of lightly fried Cauliflower? Neither did I. But you’re in for a treat when you taste them. It’s the vegetable your parents always knew you would love with all the anti-oxidants and vitamins that your doctor would get out a pen and prescribe. Also terrific are their uniquely divine Brussels Sprouts in a bacon and sweet ginger soy marinade.

When asked how they came up with this superb spout creation Chef James said, “We thought about how to make something like Brussels Sprouts that we hated as kids, taste delicious.” Mission accomplished.

There are other missions that these three pioneers have accomplished. The Banyan Burger is one of them. Made with Kobe and Wagyu beef, Fois Gras, Gruyere, Arugula and shaved white Truffle, this burger has a designer pedigree that’s rare in these parts. “The Banyan Burger is the most decadent Burger you can imagine. We use one ounce of Fois Gras and four slices of white truffle (shaved tableside) it’s pretty amazing,” said LoRe.

LoRe is right, the Burger is amazing but so is the entire operation. They have USB ports and outlets under the bar, hooks to hang purses or bags and a bar manager (and mixologist) with an encyclopedic thought process. Their specialty cocktail menu includes old staples and imaginative new recipes like the French 75, Aviation, Jalapeno Sunrise, Blood & Sand with a twist (scotch and mezcal) and a Pineapple Grove Margarita. If you love Beer, this is heaven. There’s Watermelon Saison Beer (from Palm Beach Gardens), Mega Mix Pale Ale (from Miami) and Copperpoint (from Boynton Beach).

The drink menu is comprehensive and includes an extensive wine list – both by the bottle and the shot. The lounge menu includes Dada inspired Crab Cakes, Flatbreads, Salads and Sandwiches (even a fresh lobster roll).

Since happiness is a high priority at this new haute spot they have live music Tuesday and Wednesday nights, a Jazz Brunch Sundays (10:30 to 3), daily specials and Happy Hour (from 2 to 6) with half price drinks and dishes.

That’s the way it was planned. LoRe thought long and hard about how to woo potential diners to Pineapple Grove amidst the tough competition nearby. And with their delightful framed mirror ceiling, colorful LED lit bar and outdoor seating under Delray Beach’s most famous Banyan tree it’s a slam dunk for anyone looking to enjoy a great meal in a beckoning atmosphere.

The décor doesn’t pull you in then the menu choices certainly will. How do Kobe Fois Gras sliders sound with Gruyere, arugula and white truffle aioli? The truth is that these could actually be the best sliders to come along with a gourmet taste that will captivate the most discerning palate. Another spectacular starter is the Maryland Crab Bites, made of pure crabmeat in a secret recipe cooled up by Maryland native Chef James.

The Blackened Scallops with mango chutney is also outstanding. There’s no skimping on quality in this restaurant that Moriarty said was created so people would enjoy themselves in a nurturing environment with a synergistic vibe.

There are other missions that these three owners have accomplished. The Brunch menu includes a Benedict Trio (of Crab, Shrimp Rib or Lobster and flatbreads with Spaghetti Squash and Pistachio with Ricotta, Meatball and Short Rib, Shrimp and Crab Alfredo and more. They also serve lunch amidst the Banyan tree and the sunshine with dishes like a Mac Trio (Truffle Parm, Crab, Classic Cheddar or Lobster), Taco Tios, Crab Cakes, Flatbreads, Salads and Sandwiches (even a fresh lobster roll).

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And that’s not all, the mirrors on the walls in the dining room turn into Flat Screen TV’s with the twist of the wrist and the charm just oozes from every pore of this restaurant. Everything on the menu is fresh and made to order and everyone who works there has one goal – to make you happy.

How can you beat that?

BY DIANE FEEN
PHOTOS BY LEILA MANCINI