

April 23, 2013

Curtain rises at Dickie Brennan's restaurant Tableau



Tableau has opened on Jackson Square

By Ian McNulty

The menu at restaurateur Dickie Brennan's new Tableau reads like a modern renovation of the cuisine served at nearby French Creole institutions. Green onion aioli and fried capers join the crab meat ravigote, for instance. Panko crusts the panéed veal and Abita Turbo Dog beer is worked into the onion soup. The approach feels apt, since **this new restaurant is found inside a French Quarter institution of another sort that has undergone its own modern renovation.**

Tableau opened this week in the same building that is home to **Le Petit Theatre du Vieux Carre**, which is widely recognized as the oldest community theater in America, with roots stretching back to 1916. Serious debt put its future in doubt, however, and in December 2010 the theater canceled its season and laid off its staff.

Debate over how to revive the historic theater riled some members of the local arts community, but by the end of 2011 the theater's board had signed **a deal to sell part of the property to the local restaurant management group Dickie Brennan & Co.**, which also operates Palace Café, Dickie Brennan's Steakhouse and Bourbon House. Proceeds from the sale would pay off debt and fund a renovation of the theater.

Tableau now occupies the Chartres Street side of the building, in what had been a smaller black box-style theater space, while Le Petit maintains the main theater space. The theater will stage its first post-renovation show in July, and its regular season is set to resume in September. Le Petit and Tableau share the building's lobby and center courtyard, and **Brennan has said he's hopeful the restaurant can help boost ticket sales at the theater.**

Whether a visit here includes a play or not, Tableau has planted **an ambitious new restaurant right on the edge of Jackson Square.** From the first floor bar and dining room areas, a grand staircase sweeps up to a warren of private dining rooms with access to **balconies overlooking the square or the courtyard.** The chef here is Ben Thibodeaux a Lafayette native who has been with Brennan's company for 10 years and was most recently chef de cuisine at Palace Café.

Shrimp remoulade, fried eggplant sticks, turtle soup and elaborate poached egg dishes (eggs Hussarde, eggs Sardou) all evoke old-school Creole tradition. **But more contemporary touches are always close at hand**, like crab claws in a truffle vinaigrette, roasted bone marrow with the rib eye and oysters en brochette using rosemary sprigs as the skewers and roasted garlic beurre blanc as the sauce. The dessert list runs through crepes, crème brulee and bread pudding (made from monkey bread) and also includes **tart a la bouille, a custard pie and specialty from Louisiana's bayou country** that is rarely found in the city.

Tableau serves lunch and dinner daily.

Tableau

616 S. Peter St., 504-934-3463