

DINING

Faubourg brings café life to town

French
decor and
decoration
in new eatery

BY **PATRICIA CONOVER**
for Montclair Local

A taste of France has arrived in Montclair, and just in time for Bastille Day celebrations.

Who hasn't noticed the vast space at 544 Bloomfield Ave. transforming into a restaurant and bar with outdoor seating? If you've been anticipating the new kid on the block, Faubourg opened on June 26 and is ready for diners pinning for traditional French fare or a glass of fine French wine in an outdoor without hopping a plane.

'Faubourgs' (French for districts or suburbs just outside the Paris city wall) are areas beyond the city that became cultural destinations all on their own.

Chef Olivier Muller, who hails from Strasbourg, in the Alsace region of northeastern France, worked at several restaurants for Daniel Boulud (chef and owner of Michelin-starred Daniel, db Bistro Moderne, Café Boulud and many others) for more than 20 years. Muller left his most recent position as corporate chef in charge of culinary training to give his full attention to this new venture in partnership with owner and general manager Dominique Paulin, Boulud's former director of operations. Locals no longer have to take the train into Manhattan — or spend several hundred dollars — to have a meal created by one of the most influential chefs in America. Diners can expect to spend about \$75 per person, including wine and dessert, at Faubourg.

Simple dishes that combine French-inspired modern and traditional fare is what's on the menu.

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Deep blue banquettes and custom lighting create a warm ambiance at Faubourg.

fresh," Paulin said.

Chef Muller is known for his skill at blending interesting ingredients to create, for instance, his signature halibut and asparagus fricassée (\$29), enhancing the flavors of both. Dishes like sirloin steak au poivre (\$36), duck and rhubarb (\$32), guinea hen and morels pâté en croûte (\$14), orecchiette and lamb ragout (\$26), and coq au vin (\$26) all share Alsatian flair. For dessert, pastry chef and Wayne native Melissa Rodriguez creates endnotes that are hard to resist. Choose from classics like a basket of Madeleines (\$8), tartes aux pommes fine with vanilla ice cream (\$10), or passionfruit cheesecake with mango sorbet (\$12). There's also an extensive bar menu and a variety of cocktails, wine and beer. Handcrafted cocktails like Pursuit of Passion (\$12), Grapefruit Daiquiri (\$12) or Cadillac Margarita (\$15) are good summer selec-

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tions. Wine choices include Sancerre Yves Martin, France, Loire Valley, 2018 (\$15), Domaine des Gravelles, France, Rhone Valley, 2016 (\$11), or Emile Paris Brut, Champagne, NV, (\$18.) The wine cellar currently holds more than one thousand bottles and has room for one thousand more.

For Paulin, who grew up in Western France, Daniel Boulud continues to inspire.

"I worked with him for more than 20 years, and I learned so much," Paulin said. "He is absolutely committed to

his restaurants and it shows."

There's an interplay of both traditional and contemporary elements — with the traditional, fresh, wholesome food and clean, classic design of the historic space. Faubourg is utterly French, but you won't find any frou-frou. It's contemporary, yet welcoming and elegant without being stuffy. Working with a palette of a deep blue, copper and white, owners Dominique Paulin and Olivier Muller collaborated with award-winning architect Craig Shillito of Brooklyn for more than a year on color, design, lighting and materials. Custom steel light fixtures bounce illumination off the polished carrara marble bar, sky-high windows and a two-story glass-enclosed wine cellar. The result is a warm, convivial ambience for the 130-seat restaurant with banquette and table seating downstairs, two private dining rooms on the mezzanine level, three bars,

and outdoor seating.

"I've lived in the Montclair area for 10 years and creating this restaurant was a dream. I found the space and we recognized the potential. It took more than a year for us to design and renovate the space. We took on every job," Paulin said, pointing to the ceiling. "I was up on a ladder, scraping and painting. It's a labor of love."

Paulin stressed the importance of being part of this community.

"Olivier and I are seeing great support from our Montclair community. We're working on getting everything right. It doesn't happen overnight. Although it's large space sometimes we have had to turn some people away because we wanted to be sure that everyone enjoyed the same great experience," Paulin said. "Please be patient with us. We love it here and we're in the neighborhood for the long run."