

Exceptional Dining at the Union House

Jim and Heidi Lindenberg were loyal customers at the Union House for years before they bought the restaurant. “It was a great place for a date night,” says Jim, a Milwaukee entrepreneur and philanthropist. “Patty and Curt Robinson, the owners at the time, asked us about buying it. It had a good reputation, fantastic food, a great group of employees who’d been there many years. So we thought, let’s try it.”

The married couple took over ownership of the Genesee Depot dining spot in February 2020. They wanted to update the menu and freshen the decor, but they also knew the importance of the legacy they had inherited. “Union House has such a long history – We wanted to keep the integrity of the restaurant intact,” Heidi says.

That history dates back to 1861, when Patrick Lynch, an Irish immigrant, opened what was then called The Union House Hotel. The building was, and remains to this day, the largest in Genesee Depot and it quickly became a popular destination. Lynn Fontanne and Alfred Lunt, the legendary thespians who summered at the nearby Ten Chimneys, were frequent diners. The Lindenegs were careful to respect that integral history. With COVID forcing them to close only a month after opening, they took the opportunity to update the interior with new furniture, lighting and more, including photos that document the history of the restaurant. They also added a “VIP room” to the upstairs, which seats 50 for private events.

Union House’s menu has also undergone exciting changes. While keeping favorite dishes that have been



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JIM LINDENBERG

bringing diners to restaurant for decades – such as the French onion soup and duck – the Lindenegs introduced a new wild game and seafood feature every two weeks. The wild game includes kangaroo, red deer, bison, elk, boar and other unique dishes that can’t be found elsewhere. And the seafood includes octopus, barramundi, wahoo ono and sablefish. “We actually have a waiting list of people that we call every time we have some of these dishes because they love them so much,” Heidi says.

Previous owner Curt Robinson was a scotch connoisseur who brought hundreds of varieties to the restaurant. Jim and Heidi have continued that tradition, while also updating the drink menu to include a wide variety of rare bourbons and wines. The restaurant now hosts monthly wine dinners, which are carefully curated by the chefs. The menu supports local farmers and local businesses whenever possible.

The restaurant’s recent success hasn’t gone unnoticed – it won an Open Table Diner’s Choice

award this year as well as the 2023 *Wine Spectator* Award of Excellence and was named to *Milwaukee Magazine’s* 25 Best Restaurants. Jim and Heidi credit their staff, some of whom have been at the restaurant for 30 years, with Union House’s ongoing excellence. “It’s great to see the smiles on their faces when we receive awards,” Jim says. “We’re like a family, and we’re always trying to create the best possible experience for our customers.” ♦

Union House

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From left: Executive Sous Chef Christian Garcia-Cortez, Executive Chef/GM Dan Harrell, Sous Chef Julian Moreno

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF UNION HOUSE