

## CUVÉE

### BAILLIAGE — CHARLESTON

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#### **“At the Mercy of the Chef! - a great event at Bistronomy by Nico**

By Bailli Paula Traktman Duncan

Photos by Bailli Paula Traktman Duncan and Dame Louise Konrath

There’s no denying that there is something comforting and reassuring that comes with returning to a favorite restaurant, anticipating exactly what you’ll want to order. But isn’t it also exciting to return to a favorite restaurant and have no idea what the Chef will prepare for you that evening? That’s the premise behind the “Mercy of the Chef” event held on Thursdays at Bistronomy by Nico.

Bistronomy opened in late 2020 with the goal of offering superb food in a relaxed bistro atmosphere. It is one of four successful restaurants in the greater Charleston, SC area owned and developed by Chef Nico Roma. Chef Nico is one of only 20 French Master Chefs in the US and the only one in South Carolina. Today, Bistronomy is led by Executive Chef Jim O’Connor.

Chef O’Connor, the bar manager, Kristin Cash, whose knowledge of wine made her our expert at choosing the pairings for this event, and General Manager Brendan Murphy, all say that Thursdays are their favorite night of the week. Being able to develop a new menu for the event is creative and freeing – and that’s exactly what drew us to “Mercy” on January 29<sup>th</sup> for our first event of 2026. Our group occupied all 14 seats at the bar, savoring each course and the delicious wine pairings that accompanied them.

As a First Course, we enjoyed salmon and caviar tartlets which were dressed with crème fraîche and Siberian sturgeon caviar. The tartlets were bursting





with flavor and texture, and the sparkling Levert Frères Crémant de Bourgogne Brut was a delightful complement to the dish.

The Second Course was entitled butternut squash salad, which, in addition to the delicious squash, featured chèvre cheese, honey, hazelnuts, Serrano ham and Yukon potatoes. The dish had a wonderful range of flavors and was paired with a delicious 2022 Domaine Arnaud et Stéphanie Dezat Sancerre. This wine, crafted from Sauvignon Blanc grapes, complemented the fruit, cheese and ham perfectly.

For the Third Course, Chef prepared a civet de lapin, featuring local South Carolina rabbit braised in red wine. The rabbit was accompanied by lardons, grits, and mushrooms, and was luscious and full of umami. The grits added a true South Carolina touch! The Vinsobres Côtes du Rhône, which is blended from Syrah and Grenache grapes, was a superb complement to the sumptuous dish.

To finish the meal, we enjoyed a luscious “Chocolate Marquise” with fresh strawberries, made even more enjoyable by the Martinez Ruby port that Kristin had chosen for us.

Chef Jim O’Connor worked with Chef Nico Roma for many years in different capacities; he helped to launch Bistronomy and has been the Executive Chef for 4 years. He was warm and gracious, coming out frequently to explain dishes to the guests, and was appreciative of our group’s embrace of fine food and wine. Being able to experience such creative and delicious food in an environment that felt so personal and attentive was a real treat. To show our appreciation for the evening and to recognize the Chef’s creativity and skill, we presented a Chaîne des Rôtisseurs commemorative glass plate to Chef O’Connor. We’re proud to have it gracing a shelf above the many glasses and bottles behind the bar!

The food and wine were superb, and the relaxed, welcoming atmosphere of this lovely restaurant encouraged all members and guests to mingle, toast one another, and enjoy the camaraderie that makes these events special. In the rapidly growing - and tourist favorite - city of Charleston, Bistronomy prides itself on being a restaurant that aims to be a favorite among locals. I speak not only for myself but for all the guests that participated in this event - being subjected to the “mercy of the chef” at Bistronomy is something I would happily endure any time!

Vive la Chaîne!