

Bernard's & Sarah's Wine Bar in Ridgefield

Written by Fran Sikorski

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Bernard and Sarah Bouissou in the new Sarah's Wine Bar, upstairs at Bernard's in Ridgefield. Photo by Scott Mullin.

Nine years ago, Chef Bernard Bouissou and his wife, Sarah Bouissou, a pastry chef, caterer and event coordinator, took over what had been the Inn at Ridgefield and opened Bernard's.

A grand staircase and Steinway piano at the entrance to the main dining room set an elegant tone for dining, and beautifully designed gardens (by Andrew Grossman) encourage outdoor dining, cocktail parties and weddings in warmer weather. Bernard's is rated as one of the finest formal dining restaurants in the country having earned a Michelin Dining Diamond Award, DiRona Distinguished Restaurants Award, "extraordinary" rating by Zagat, and a Best Award from Wine Spectator Magazine.

The wine list features 1500 wines from France, the United States and around the world and 150 half-bottle wine selections; also available are 15 beers, a martini list, dessert wine list and an extensive spirits selection.



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Chef Bernard's signature dinner appetizer is the Hudson Valley foie gras trio: smoked with apple ginger chutney, sautéed with apple cider reduction, torchon with Concord grape gellee (\$25) and tuna tartar Napoleon (\$15).

Signature entrees are portobello-crusting filet of halibut with wild mushroom risotto and asparagus and balsamic mushroom reduction (\$30) and the duck duo (\$34): roasted breast and confit leg, with salsify, spinach, braised chestnuts, asparagus and wild mushrooms with red wine sauce.



Bernard's. —Photo by Scott Mullin

To offer more affordable dining choices, the Bouissous had planned to open another more casual restaurant, but failed to find the right location. Instead, they opened Sarah's Wine Bar at Bernard's, in a space normally used for special functions. On the are a variety of small plates, a New England clam chowder like no other, and a ground Kobe sirloin hamburger on brioche (made by the chef) with french fries, pickles (also made in-house), and lettuce and tomato (\$15 and delicious!). There's a special wine list at \$25 a bottle.

Popular items on Sarah's Wine Bar menu (\$9 to \$32) are French onion soup; flat bread pizza du jour; orange and rosemary lamb stew with creamy polenta and baby vegetables; french fries with herb salt; cheese fondue du jour.

A glowing fireplace and guitar music by Bob Curiano and Mark Mollica on alternating evenings adds to the relaxed atmosphere. Everyone seems to know each other at Sarah's Wine Bar.

Desserts (\$12) at Bernard's and Sarah's Wine Bar, all artistic presentations, are an overwhelming temptation. I enjoyed a lighter version of apple strudel, also like no other, with vanilla bean ice cream. Other choices are chocolate fondue for two; lime cheesecake with mixed berry compote and lime custard; crème brûlée trio, banana, apricot and vanilla bean; pear almond tart; and pineapple and white polenta upside down cake with blueberry maple compote and vanilla bean ice cream.

Always remarkably consistent, Chef Bernard presents contemporary French cuisine at Bernard's in a



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tranquil setting; he combines spirit and sparkle with his new menu upstairs at Sarah's Wine Bar, where regularly scheduled wine-tastings are community fund-raisers.

Bernard's & Sarah's Wine Bar 20 West Lane - Ridgefield, 203-438-8282 Lunch at Bernard's served 12 to 2:30 Tuesday to Saturday; dinner, Tuesday to Thursday 6 to 9, Friday and Saturday 6 to 10, and Sunday 5 to 8:30; Sunday brunch, prix fixe (appetizer, entrée and dessert), \$35, from 12 to 2:30; closed Monday. Serving hours at Sarah's Wine Bar (upstairs): open for dinner at 5 Wednesday through Sunday; special wine list, at \$25 a bottle; wine tastings/dinners and other special events. Closed Monday and Tuesday. Reservations preferred for Bernard's; no reservations necessary for Sarah's Wine Bar; major credit cards; handicap entrance; child friendly; full bar; wine-tasting dinners; contemporary French menu at Bernard's; bistro-style menu with an American flair at Sarah's Wine Bar; take-out; off-premises catering; private functions; smart casual dress; entertainment, wine classes starting soon; parking adjacent to the restaurant; valet parking weekends.