

Some 40 restaurants and venues to be showcased as part of Montréal en Lumière

MtlRestoRap

MIKE COHEN



Last year at this time I was previewing the annual Montréal en Lumière (montrealenlumiere.com), which was set to return to a full in-person format. Then, the omicron variant of COVID-19 reared its ugly head. Fortunately, when the programming began restaurants were permitted to open their dining rooms, albeit with a limited capacity.

COVID-19 is still very much with us, but government restrictions of any kind related to the virus seem to be gone for good. That is good news for the 2023 edition of Montréal en Lumière, presented in collaboration with Scotiabank, set to take place February 16 to March 5 under the theme Discover the Best of Montreal in Winter! Some 40 Montreal restaurants and venues will be welcoming international and local chefs and producers, while downtown will be buzzing with gourmet activities.

For this 24th edition, the Air France Finest Tables will welcome more than 30 chefs, including a dozen from northern Europe. Among them are Benoit Neusy (Michelin star chef, restaurant l'Impératif au Domaine d'Arondeau, France) at La Chronique; Romain Meder (Michelin star chef, Domaine de Primard, Guainville, France) at Mastard; Ina Niiniketo (Sikke's, Helsinki) at Ratafia; and Lionel Lévy (Michelin star chef, Inter-Continental Marseille) at Osco!

Wine growers, such as Julien Labet, who will be welcomed by Menu Extra, and Laurent Cazottes at Chez Victoire, will also be joining in the festivities. In addition to traditional tasting menus, the Air France Finest Tables will feature other palate-popping experiences, such as exclusive lunches, brunches, 5 à 7 (happy hours), not to mention delicious confections in partnership with Cacao Barry and Esprits libres, a rare treat for those with a sweet tooth out there.

The participating restaurants are: Au Petit Extra, Auberge Saint-Gabriel, Bar George, Barroco, Beaufort Bistro, Beaver Hall, Bivouac, Blanc Bec, Cabaret L'Enfer, Chez Victoire, État-Major, Ferreira Café, Foiegwa, Foxy, Galaxie Brasserie, Hélicoptère, Ikanos. Kamù, La Chronique on Laurier, Le Mouso, Le Virunga, Lloyd, Maison Boulud, Mastard, Menu Extra, Monarque, Monème, Mon Lapin, Okeya Kyujiro, Osco, Pastel, Ratafia, Renoir at the Sofitel Montreal, Restaurant de l'ITHQ, Restaurant h3, Rosélys at Hôtel Reine Elizabeth, Rose Ross, Terrasse Nordheimer and Toqué.

Once again this year, visitors will love the popular



Bivoac serves French cuisine at its DoubleTree by Hilton Montreal location

Couette & Gastronomie packages. Hotels and restaurants will be taking part to whet everyone's appetites with gourmet tasting experiences indoors. A dozen or so hotels will be welcoming guests. They include: Auberge du Vieux-Port (and its Taverne Gaspar restaurant), DoubleTree by Hilton Montréal, Embassy Suites by Hilton, Fairmont Le Reine Elizabeth. Hôtel Monville, Hôtel William Gray (and its Maggie Oakes restaurant), L'Intercontinental Montréal, Le Petit Hôtel and Lofts du Vieux-Port

The Quartier Gourmand will take place for the first time in the hall of Place des Arts (Espace culturel Georges-Émile Lapalme). Over the course of two weekends (February 18-19, and 25-26, from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m.), this special site will offer over 20 free activities, including conferences, tastings as well as culinary demonstrations and workshops.

Go to montrealenlumiere.com to access the complete program.

Follow Mike Cohen's culinary adventures at www.MtlRestoRap.com. He can be reached at info@mikecohen.ca



Okeya Kyujiro is Montreal's first reservation only OMAKASE restaurant

Mike's Rest Notes: Kettleman's Bagel officially opens its first Montreal location

By Mike Cohen

For family reasons I have been going back and forth to Ottawa on a regular basis for the past year and a half. I absolutely love the nation's capital, notably its restaurant scene. My discovery of Kettleman's Bagel last year and meeting the founder Craig Buckley was indeed a highlight, especially when he revealed to me that not only was he native of Montreal – but more than 30 years after establishing his first location in Ottawa, expansion was coming to our fair city.

On January 10, Kettleman's Bagel officially opened its first location in Quebec, steps from the Bell Centre on Avenue des Canadiens. A big thanks to Buckley, President Amer Wahab and Communications Manager Emma Latreille for the VIP tour. I also got to meet lead staff people Ziad Zeidov and Azahara Munoz. Open 24/7, 365 days a year, Kettleman's offers delicious sandwiches on Montreal bagels which are rolled, kettled, and baked in a specially-designed oven.

Buckley opened the first Kettleman's Bagel in Ottawa in 1993. Today, Kettleman's operates seven other locations in Ottawa, Toronto, and Whitby. By rolling, kettling, and baking traditional Montréal bagels, Kettleman's upholds an unwavering commitment to the traditional quality of our food, and strives to persuade every guest to come back again and again.

The kitchen staff has been boosted by 10 experienced staffers from Ottawa and Toronto the first week to help get things rolling. As you make your way through the queue line, the fridges have endless array of homemade cream cheese, banana and lemon breads, pizza bagels, knishes, latkes, smoked salmon, Chicago-style pickles and whole lot more. When you get to the counter, besides the different flavored bagels, you can choose from some delicious Danishes and sweets. There are places to sit. You will be given a pager and called when your order is ready. This place will indeed be rock and rolling before and after any large-scale Bell Centre events! And here is some fresh news I can share with you. Kettleman's plans to open a second Quebec location in 2023 in Dollard des Ormeaux!

For more details log on to www.kettleman'sbagels.ca
Zaks For Breakfast: Last summer I experienced the iconic Zak's Diner for the first time. Established in 1986 by John Borsten and some partners, one of whom had a son named Zak, there are four separate locations for this '50s-themed eatery and a fifth on the way in February. Recently, while in Ottawa, I dropped by the Elgin Street spot to try their breakfast. Greeting me at the door and serving the meal was Ben Capaday, whose parents Milton and Cindy are originally from Chomedey. Milton is a retired police officer who worked for the SWAT Team.



Amer Wahab and Kettleman's founder Craig Buckley

I had my eyes on the French Toast and Eggs right from the start: two eggs over easy, a choice of bacon, ham, sausage, smoked meat, or fresh fruit and French toast made with extra thick Texas toast. I added some crispy home fries to the order, a piping hot cup of decaf coffee and some orange juice.

For more details and full menus: www.zaksdiner.com