

Rib 'N Reef's rooftop terrasse is another magic touch by owner Peter Katsoudas

MtlRestoRap

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There are a select few standout steakhouses in Montreal, but the one that should be rewarded as a model of consistency and continued excellence belongs to Rib 'N Reef on Decarie Boulevard under the ownership of Peter Katsoudas.

On May 30, Katsoudas celebrated his 70th birthday and the 32nd anniversary since he purchased the establishment with a VIP cocktail party on the classy rooftop terrasse. With his wife Antonella – a partner in life and business – and key staff members by his side, Katsoudas was in fine form and expressed pride about the reputation he has built for the brand over the past three decades.

My family and I had never experienced the terrasse here before. It can seat between 60 and 75 people, is completely covered and has electronically controlled shaded blinds. The ambiance at this spot is absolutely fabulous!



Server Rafael makes salmon tartare at the table.

“Class” is the word here, from the moment you valet park your vehicle. The restaurant first opened in 1960. But as someone who has been fortunate enough to frequent this place for many of its years, it was only when Katsoudas stepped in did business really take off. He undertook



a major remodelling of the facility in 1999 and then again in 2007 by adding a cigar lounge and the rooftop terrasse. Then, in 2016, the main entrance was redone. Next on the agenda will be the addition of a carport to receive his guests, something which will be well appreciated when it rains or snows.

General Manager Abou Hamad oversees a full-time staff of 85 people. Born in Greece, Katsoudas was seven years old when he came to Montreal with his parents and two sisters. Even back then, he says, he knew his future was in the culinary business. “We had family members who owned restaurants,” he noted. “I got to hang out there and I liked it. While I attended school I worked at restaurants to earn some cash.”

Katsoudas opened his first restaurant at the age of 19 and followed that up with two more. In 1991, growing restless and looking for a new challenge, Katsoudas bought the Rib 'N Reef from David Stendell and Morty Fruchter.

The service is impeccable here. No sooner are you seated, a breadbasket, bread sticks, pickles and coleslaw arrive at the table. Katsoudas, his managers and the sommelier circle the restaurant regularly and make sure all of the customers are happy. Rib 'N Reef is known for serving the finest grilled dry-aged meats, fresh fish and seafood from around the globe and premium wines in Montreal. There is a custom butchery on the premises.

We were a party of three at our table. We started off with some wine. I opted for a glass of Cava sparkling wine. As we perused the menu, we focused on the appetizers and stopped at 12 delicious, shucked oysters



Peter Katsoudas and his wife Antonella.

while one of the servers Rafael prepared some extraordinary salmon tartare right at our table. It was a work of art. For the main course, we shared a 34-ounce Porterhouse steak, cooked to perfection medium rare, with rice pilaf and sautéed mushrooms on the side. We saved some room for dessert, enjoying the decadent chocolate lava cake with vanilla ice cream.

Katsoudas is proud of his record as a boss. There is a very low turnover rate for his staff. “They are like family to me,” he says. “I can’t do this without them.”

Log on to www.MtlRestoRap.com to read an expanded story on Rib 'N Reef and the magic touch of Peter Katsoudas.

Rib 'N Reef is open for lunch, afternoon meals and dinner. Reservations are recommended. Call 514-735-1601 or log on to www.ribnreef.com

Mike's Notes: Bâton Rouge Grillhouse & Bar continues to grow; Dizz's smoked meat and La Pizza Week

The franchise on Decarie for Bâton Rouge Grillhouse & Bar recently held a VIP reopening after an extensive \$1.3 million renovation and redesign. The seating capacity here is 242 in the dining room, with an additional 65 on the seasonal terrace. Everything from the booths, tables, lighting, TVs, bar, washrooms and wine cellar are spanking new. The restaurant's new design and layout boasts a modern, laid-back look that strikes the right balance between comfortable seating and the lively bar atmosphere. The curated sound system and music create an ambiance that exudes casual elegance, while the lighting offers guests a varying atmosphere throughout the day.

Marketing Director Maria Frank notes that locations at Complexe Desjardins and in Lachenaie will get new looks this summer, followed by Kanata in the Ottawa area and a brand new franchise at Carrefour Angrignon in LaSalle in the fall. I was recently invited to Decarie for a tasting where I enjoyed some piping hot, creamy lobster bisque, the 15 ounce rib steak accompanied by fries and a key lime pie, dipped in chocolate for dessert. My friend opted for their trademark slide-off-the-bones ribs and chose the cheesecake to top things off. Frank said that food innovation has been a major pillar for the chain in 2023. A new Spring/Summer menu features items such as black cod, tempura shrimp, grilled octopus and lobster. Info: www.batonrouge.ca/en

Top of the line smoked meat at Dizz: Over at Dizz's Bagel and Deli, owner Steve Dizgun has added something quite special to the Côte St. Luc Road establishment's offerings. Billy Billy Berenholz is the owner of the nearly seven decade old Lesters Deli (<https://www.lestersdeli.com/>) on Bernard Street in Outremont, as well as Mr. Smoked Meat (<https://www.mrsmokedmeat.com>), a purveyor of upscale smoked meat in the wholesale sector. Via his Mr. Smoked Meat brand, Dizz's (<https://www.dizzsbagel.com>) can now make you a hot smoked meat sandwich between two slices of rye bread, with mustard, and a soft drink for \$13.99. For an extra dollar you can also get a pickle. I was invited over for a tasting and yes folks this was quite a treat!

La Pizza Week: As a foodie I just love what Na'eem Adam and Thierry Rassam of People Mover Technologies have done the last few years with festivals focusing on burgers, poutine and most recently pizza. Their third edition of La Pizza Week, marked across Canada in early May was a lot of fun. Montreal had 26 restaurants enter the festival and I visited two of them: Pizzeria No. 900 (<https://no900.com>) and Dunn's Famous on Decarie (www.dunnsdecarie.ca). Pizzeria No. 900 now has 28 locations. I dropped by the franchise on Monkland Avenue in NDG, operated by Patrice Tremblay and his wife (they also own the Rockland locale).



Bâton Rouge Grillhouse & Bar on Decarie received a complete makeover.

Their entry was called the Charlevoix, containing organic meats, tomato sauce, pancetta, ventricina, onions, fior di latte, nduja, pecorino romano, black pepper. I really liked it. My next visit was to Tony Sama at Dunn's Famous on Decarie where I sampled their classic all dressed pizza made with tomato sauce, mozzarella cheese, all beef pepperoni, fresh cut green peppers and mushrooms topped with their signature chopped smoked meat on a hand stretched dough. It was delicious!