



Pictured:
Owner, Amy Cabaniss

Story By Steve Cook

As you approach **JULEP'S** (1721 E. Franklin Street), the candles burning in the windows give you a hint that a very special, romantic dining getaway lies just ahead. You're stepping into one of the city's most historical commercial buildings, which has been meticulously, and beautifully, restored to house this cozy Shockoe Bottom restaurant.

Inside, you immediately realize that the exterior is no mere façade. The spiral staircase leading to an intimate upstairs dining area, the flickering fire in the fireplace, the soft, subdued lighting; it all comes together to make Julep's a very special place in which to enjoy an extraordinary dining experience with your special love.

Of course, the ambience is only one part of that experience. There really must be a coming together of atmosphere, service, and, of course, great food, to make any restaurant truly special. Julep's uniquely blends these three elements to create an unparalleled dining experience.

As for the service, owner **Amy Cabaniss** says, "Every individual on our staff is awesome. I'm so proud of each and every one of them." Cabaniss explains that while it can be a difficult balance to achieve, the Julep's wait staff provides excellent, formal service, but without stuffiness. "Everyone here is very attentive to the needs and wishes of our guests," she says.

Regarding, perhaps the most important element...the food, Cabaniss describes Julep's menu, which is based on her love for the cuisine found in such Southern cities as Savannah, New Orleans, and Charleston, as "upscale...formal." She says that Julep's chef, Kevin Wilkins, is very attentive to every detail. "His presentation is always beautiful," she adds.

We asked Cabaniss to give us her menu recommendations for a meal, during which the gentleman was planning to pop THE question. "If he were going to propose at the beginning of the meal," she says, "I'd recommend

the couple enjoy a split bottle of Veuve Clicquot-Ponsardin champagne to accompany the proposal. If he's waiting until the end of the meal, this champagne goes well with dessert."

As for appetizers, Cabaniss recommends the shrimp and corncakes, which she says is wonderful. "I also love the sweet potato and butternut squash soup," she adds.

Following a mixed green salad, Cabaniss suggests two entrees, "The truffle pan-seared scallops are excellent, and you can't go wrong with the roast pork chop, served with mashed sweet potatoes finished with a maple syrup glaze." For dessert, she highly recommends the Bananas Foster flambé, which is prepared tableside. She says that if arranged in advance, the server can have the engagement ring discreetly placed on the lady's dessert plate when she is served.

Cabaniss will be happy to help coordinate any special requests for a romantic meal, or for any special dining occasion. "I love doing that," she says. "It's so much fun." She tells of one male

guest who wanted to pop the question at Julep's. "He had his girlfriend's boss send her here to speak with me about a company dinner party. That was just a pretense to get her in the restaurant.

"She didn't have any idea what was in store. As part of the 'business meeting,' Cabaniss escorted the young woman up the spiral staircase, under the guise of showing her the dining area. "We had sprinkled rose petals, accompanied by flickering candles, in the aisles," Cabaniss continues. "And, there sat her boyfriend, waiting." Needless to say, the young woman was totally surprised by the special arrangements, which would contribute to a very memorable evening.

If you would like Amy Cabaniss to help make your dining experience at Julep's something about which you'll, one day, be telling the grandkids, or to simply make reservations (recommended) for one of the most enjoyable dining experiences offered in Richmond, phone her at 804-377-3968. ■

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