



September 24, 2021

## **Gene & Georgetti Celebrates 80 Years**

Gene & Georgetti, Chicago's original steakhouse since 1941 is celebrating. "We are celebrating making it this far through this pandemic, we are celebrating our team and all of the tireless work that they have done the last year and a half, and we are celebrating reaching 80 years of business this year," says Michelle Durpetti, third-generation and daughter of owners, Marion & Tony Durpetti.

After suffering a kitchen fire in October 2019 at its downtown location in the heart of River North (500 N. Franklin St.), the Durpetti family – who owns the iconic destination – was planning a symbolic reopening, "That would have paid homage to a rich past while celebrating the future of the Gene & Georgetti name."

"Instead," says Michelle, "we opened for delivery and carry out that very same day, which was something we had not done much of before this pandemic." Having calibrated quickly, albeit somewhat painfully, "we definitely had some bumps in the road when we started. Processing what was happening while trying to stay focused on preserving the brand and being mindful of employees, all while navigating the constantly evolving health and safety protocols, required time-which was something we just did not have when things were changing so fast."

These days, embracing the uncertain comes with the territory of running a restaurant more than ever, but focusing on what never changes is what provides the foundation that anchors the team when things really start to feel stressful. Gene & Georgetti continues to offer its customers quality, affordable options to feed their families and loved ones. From seasonal menu offerings to a constantly evolving wine and cocktail list, to the ever-present and all important prime-aged steaks, the menu is now an homage to the family's Italian heritage led by head chef, Cristiano Bassani, who hails from Bergamo, Italy.

"I love this job, it is a passion for me, and here, together with Michelle and Collin (Pierson, Durpetti's husband), we focus on the very best ingredients. That is such a major part of what I love about this job; bringing the freshest ingredients to the dishes that we create. We make our desserts in house, we are beginning to make all of our own pastas now (coming this fall). We make everything that we can, and we offer a variety of Italian dishes that complement our steaks and chops," says Bassani. "This menu is equal parts quality, creativity and passion. I am very proud of that."

For Michelle, this anniversary would typically include a swanky party and a lot of celebrating. The third-generation restaurateur is by trade an event and wedding planner, so marking milestone anniversaries for the restaurant has always been right in her wheelhouse. But these days, the focus is more on the team than parties. "While we love celebrating our customers with a great soiree, we know how hard our team is working now, and one of our biggest focuses is their quality of life while

they are here, and making sure that they have time away with their families and loved ones. I love a good party, don't get me wrong! But we have had so much to focus on and dedicate ourselves to, so for now, the party will wait- but, not forever, because nobody throws a party like Gene & Georgetti," says Durpetti.

Instead of that party, G&G has revitalized their little corner of River North. Michelle and Collin have lead projects to truly show how young 80 years can look. A major re-painting of their 3-story building that dates to 1874 has truly been a massive difference to every employee, customer and neighbor in the community. In addition, a new version of their iconic window has been created out of necessity, as a result of the civil unrest last summer that irreparably damaged the old window.

"This pandemic has taught us now more than ever, that necessity is the mother of invention," says Tony, and "like every restaurant out there, we have had to think on our feet and be creative while staying true to our core brand values, and rediscovering those values. There have been so many silver linings to this pandemic and one of the main ones has been the opportunity to really spend time together as a team and fine tune everything that we do internally, including how we care for and about one another."

While the family may plan a celebration for next summer, right now the main way they are celebrating, "is by being open, working really hard to honor the legacy that both Georgetti and Gene left us, and making sure that we take nothing for granted. We came very close, more than once, to going right over that cliff we were dangling from. It is the tenacity of this team, this family and the love we all have for this brand that has kept us going. We are so looking forward to this fourth quarter and being here for people as we move into the Holiday Season. We remain cautious, but we feel really proud of what we have accomplished thus far and that is now what keeps us going. That, and each other."

---

URL to feature:

<https://www.fsrmagazine.com/content/gene-georgetti-celebrates-80-years>