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Happy Birthday, Georgica! Executive Chef Seth Levine Opens Up About the Success of His Wainscott Hotspot

By Laura Euler

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Georgica Restaurant in Wainscott recently celebrated five years in the Hamptons. With eateries often lasting only a summer or two, longevity is no small accomplishment. At the first annual **Voss Foundation** Benefit hosted by supermodel Ariel Meredith and sponsored by Barry's Bootcamp, SevJet, and Uber, we sat down with executive chef Seth Levine to find out the secret behind his restaurant's success.

What has made Georgica profitable for the past five years?

First of all, I think we have really good food. Some of these places in the Hamptons pop up for a summer or two, and they don't really care as much about the food. From the get go, we understood that **Georgica** was a restaurant first. And it's important to provide tasty, seasonal fare that people will come back to eat weekend after weekend.

You are involved with a number of restaurants, so what makes Georgica different? What do you think is so special about having a restaurant in the Hamptons?

Well, when you walk into **Georgica**, you feel the comfort of being in a real Hamptons restaurant. The design of it is nautical and it's an old mansion. So it is quintessential Hamptons. We're on Georgica Pond, which is one of the most exclusive properties that you could ever walk on, and that just makes everything about our restaurant unique.

As the head chef, how do you balance the perception of Georgica as a serious restaurant with it being a late night hotspot?

We really are the inventors of the one-stop shop experience out in the Hamptons. We recognize that there are early reservations that are not looking to party, and we never even let that customer know that we turn into a fun lounge of atmosphere. And everyone wants that 9:00 sweet spot reservation, so they can sit down to eat and not have to reenter **Georgica**.

With so many people wanting a late reservation, how does that influence the food?

For the kitchen, it's quite difficult when after we've just seated the entire restaurant at 9:30. It's a younger crowd, mid 30s, and they typically want to stay later into the evening. So we don't want to be too heavy with the food. It's the summer, so we like to keep the fare light, airy, and fresh. I think it's important to incorporate seafood in a big way, because we're at the beach. There are some comfort food twists on the menu, but we also don't want to overstuff our clientele.

Do you shop the farmers markets on the East End for local ingredients?

We do, and it's one of my favorite things! Every week have different seasonal specials based on what looks best at the market that day. It's fun that we get to change things all of the time. In Manhattan, there are some great farmers markets, but it's different from shopping in the Hamptons. When I'm out east, I feel like the food was just grown

there that day.

What's your favorite thing on the menu right now?

[Laughs] Wow, I love everything! The watermelon tomato salad has been there for the entire five years, and it just screams summer. It's extremely refreshing. We use heirloom tomatoes, watermelon, micro basil, and it's just a delicious, summery salad that everybody responds to. I'm also a big fan of the lobster white truffle macaroni and cheese. It's also been there all five years, and it's one of our signatures. I also love the seared scallops with the country corn pudding right underneath it. Those three dishes have really become **Georgica** staples.

Is there anything that you would like to experiment with that's not on the menu?

We recently added the raw bar, and everyone loves that. It's funny, because summer is not actually even the correct season for oysters, but it's what everyone thinks of, and it's worked out really well for us. Throughout the years, I've had so many different things on the menu, and I really like where we are at right now.

Since you were on *Hell's Kitchen*, would you ever consider filming a reality show at Georgica?

You know, I'm not totally opposed to it, but I don't know if all my partners would jump on board with the idea. But I will say that it would make for a great reality show. We see a lot, everything from people having way too much fun from people being extremely excited to be at **Georgica**. There are just a lot of things that would make for great TV. So you never know!

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