

CAFÉ ALYCE PONDERES A *JERSEY CITY* CUISINE

Jersey City, NJ: Café Alyce has launched a dinner series that strives to uncover a *Jersey City cuisine* shaped by the city's history and by the diversity of *all* of its peoples.

Says Chef and co-founder Tory Aunspach: "Each of the world's most venerated cuisines are characterized by the flavors and techniques of one specific culture. The question we are pursuing is 'can a cuisine be shaped by a place whose identity is a woven fabric of cultures who share a common history?' In other words, what would a Jersey City cuisine be like, how might it be distinct from the cuisine of New York City and how might it change how we think about ourselves as a community?"

When it opened in 2021, Café Alyce surprised Jersey City by serving a breakfast, brunch & lunch service that mirrored the city back on itself, offering dishes inspired by a variety of the city's ethnic communities. Says co-founder Natalie Miniard: "This was a baby step in us questioning why a cuisine couldn't reflect a place rather than a culture." Based on that thinking and approach to our cooking, NJ.com honored Café Alyce in 2021 as New Jersey's #3 best restaurant without ever having a dinner service.

In mid-2022, Café Alyce invited Peter LeSar, American restaurateur and bestselling author of *Restaurant Strong*, to join as partner. LeSar, along with his local partners, launched two restaurants (both recognized by *The World's 50 Best* in its Discovery Series) that explored the identity of Panamanian cuisine.

Says Miniard: "We felt for a while that we were scratching an itch, and there was more to do. We believed that Peter had the unique background to help us to better explore culinary identity, but in this case that of Jersey City."

Says LeSar: "Menus are static things that freeze frame restaurants. Trying to peel back what a Jersey City cuisine might look like is a never-ending journey that would require us to ask new questions of ourselves and to pursue a dynamic format that allows us to deeply explore the city's great narratives. Founding a dinner series of multi-course meals that each excavate within a local theme seemed to be the best way to peel back the layers of collective identity. The culinary identity of New York City is beautifully distinct in the world, and yet Jersey City has its own separate history and character within which I believe a singular, powerful culinary identity might be hiding in plain sight waiting for the community to ask the right questions."

The team also noted that (in order to better represent the cultural and social fabric of Jersey City) it should diversify: "It was time to build out our shareholder base to reflect the Jersey City community. The first people we invited were Jersey City residents Devanshu & Melody Mehrotra who add tremendous value to our team with their unique mix of financial, analytical and design backgrounds, and who fully support Café Alyce's mission-first approach." Adds Devanshu: "For the dinner series to genuinely excavate for some underlying truths of Jersey City cuisine, the team intends to tap into the full choral symphony of diverse voices that is Jersey City. My wife and I are excited to support Chef Tory and the team in those diversification efforts."

Says Aunspach: "As chef, I will not be indifferent about who builds our food. Restaurants in the city and in California that courageously explore the outer edges of American cuisine do so with teams of the best culinary professionals from all over the country. We are building our cooking and serving teams with a diversity of talent *only*

from Jersey City and, where we lack in training, we are advancing with Jersey City gumption and self-development to earn our way as ambassadors of our cuisine.”

The Café Alyce team invites the community to join in its long-term journey as guests, team members, meal collaborators and even critics.

Says LeSar: “I believe Chef Tory is one of the bravest chefs in America right now. He wants community input to speak loudly, both to celebrate when we nail it and to help us to understand where we fall short so that we can reflect our city ever better. This desire for constructive community input is unusual in the restaurant space, but Chef Tory knows that in exploring Jersey City’s culinary identity, his team must learn together with all corners of the city. Real exploration requires that we push beyond traditional culinary boundaries...some of what we uncover will be uncomfortable and some we know will unfold timeless stories of Jersey City coming together.”

The first culinary story being told by Café Alyce is called simply, *1894*. This 10-course meal honors the year that our building on Montgomery Street opened as the Borden Condensed Milk Company. The menu also speaks to an era when Jersey City first questioned its own values as the Gilded Age ended in recession and the roots of a new Progressive Era began to spread. We serve the 1894 menu only on Friday nights for now and to a maximum of just 20 guests, so the service is by necessity [reservation only](#). It is the only dinner service we currently offer and is our beta step in collaborating with the wonderful amalgam of humanity that is Jersey City. We look forward to serving you and to hearing from each of you as a valued member of our community.

ABOUT CAFÉ ALYCE

Café Alyce opened in 2021 at 641 Montgomery Street in Jersey City, NJ. We serve breakfast & lunch every day except Tuesday. We serve brunch on the weekends. On Friday nights, we serve culinary stories of Jersey City as we continue our long-term quest to understand how a Jersey City cuisine might reflect us all. We will never be perfect, but we try to care for you as neighbors and our food will always reflect who we are as a community. On Friday nights, we serve only 20 guests on a reservation-only basis. To learn more, please visit us at www.cafealyce.com.