

BEST BUSINESS RESTAURANT

John Ash & Co.



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—Percy Brandon

By Cerrissa Kim

John Ash & Co. opened its doors 35 years ago as one of a handful of fine dining establishments in Sonoma County. Today, there are hundreds of wonderful restaurants, many that garner Michelin mentions, and still John Ash & Co. continues to be among the most recognized and notable restaurants around. From August 9 to 15, the restaurant will be launching a reunion event, inviting everyone who's been involved with John Ash & Co. during the last 35 years to be a part of this celebration. It'll even be partnering with John Ash himself to bring back the 1980s menus that first put it on the map.

During the last year, the restaurant introduced a chef's tasting menu. Each course has the option to be paired with different wines carefully chosen by wine director and sommelier, Brandon Schrey. The special offering has become a popular item enjoyed by locals and visitors alike. Another new venture has been the introduction of a wine menu offered electronically. When the iPad wine menu was first offered, the restaurant continued to print paper copies too, unsure of how patrons would react to the new technology. The electronic wine menu has proven to be an enjoyable experience for diners, letting them look at pictures of wine labels, read descriptions of the 300-plus wine selections featured, and sort them by varietal, growing area and name. It also features liquors and other drink options and, these days, staff no longer needs to print up any wine menus, since the iPad option has proven to be so easy for guests to use.

Percy Brandon, general manager of Vintners Inn (which includes John Ash & Co.), says the restaurant offers a farm-to-table style of food offerings. There are three different culinary gardens accessible to chef Tom Schmidt, who works with culinary gardener Bob Hornback to always



make sure the produce is of the freshest and highest quality possible. "One of the reasons we continue to excel in our dining experience is that our owners, Don and Rhonda Carano, are interested in innovation and quality," says Brandon. He also

credits the restaurant's success to the fact that the staff listens to what their guests want and show an interest in thinking of ways to meet diners' needs, always maintaining and expanding a core way of operating that started 35 years ago.

"We're grateful to *NorthBay biz* readers for again choosing John Ash & Co. as their favorite restaurant. We'd like to ask them to support chef Tom in the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society Man of the Year campaign, a fund-raising competition to raise money to help blood cancer patients. The campaign runs April 9 to June 20, and there will be several celebrations as well as a big gala on May 3. John Ash & Co. supports this event because it helps us to be connected to the community for a good cause, and I think that's what people really like," says Brandon. ♦



The Front Room bar and lounge at John Ash & Co. is a popular gathering spot.

www.vintnersinn.com/johnash.asp