

Avoir La Pêche!

Portland's new bistro in Longfellow Square "has the peach" and is at the top of its game.

BY DIANE HUDSON

Welcome PETITE JACQUELINE! The impressive French bistro is the brainchild of the folks who gave us FIVE FIFTY-FIVE on Congress Street: chef/owner Steve Corry (Maine Restaurant Association's 2011 Chef of the Year), his wife/partner Michelle, and partner/manager Liz Kayo.

Petite Jacqueline is unpretentious, with cheery, soft yellow walls and minimalist decor. Warm and welcoming, the space was designed to emulate a cozy dinner at the home of Michelle's grandmother, Jacqueline.

Our meal begins with a soft and chewy baguette served in a brown paper bag. Unwrapping the silverware—charmingly swathed in blue-and-white kitchen towels—we prepare to taste the confit de langue d'agneau (\$8), lamb's tongue cooked in its own fat with French green lentils, a variety often called "poor man's caviar."

Next to arrive is the terrine of foie gras (\$13), graced with local honey, brioche rounds, and a compote of cherries and apricots, which plays silky and sweet on the palate. Following up is the roast pork belly with cabbage and herbs (\$8). The buttery and salty belly is crisped on the outside, and the kraut lends well-balanced





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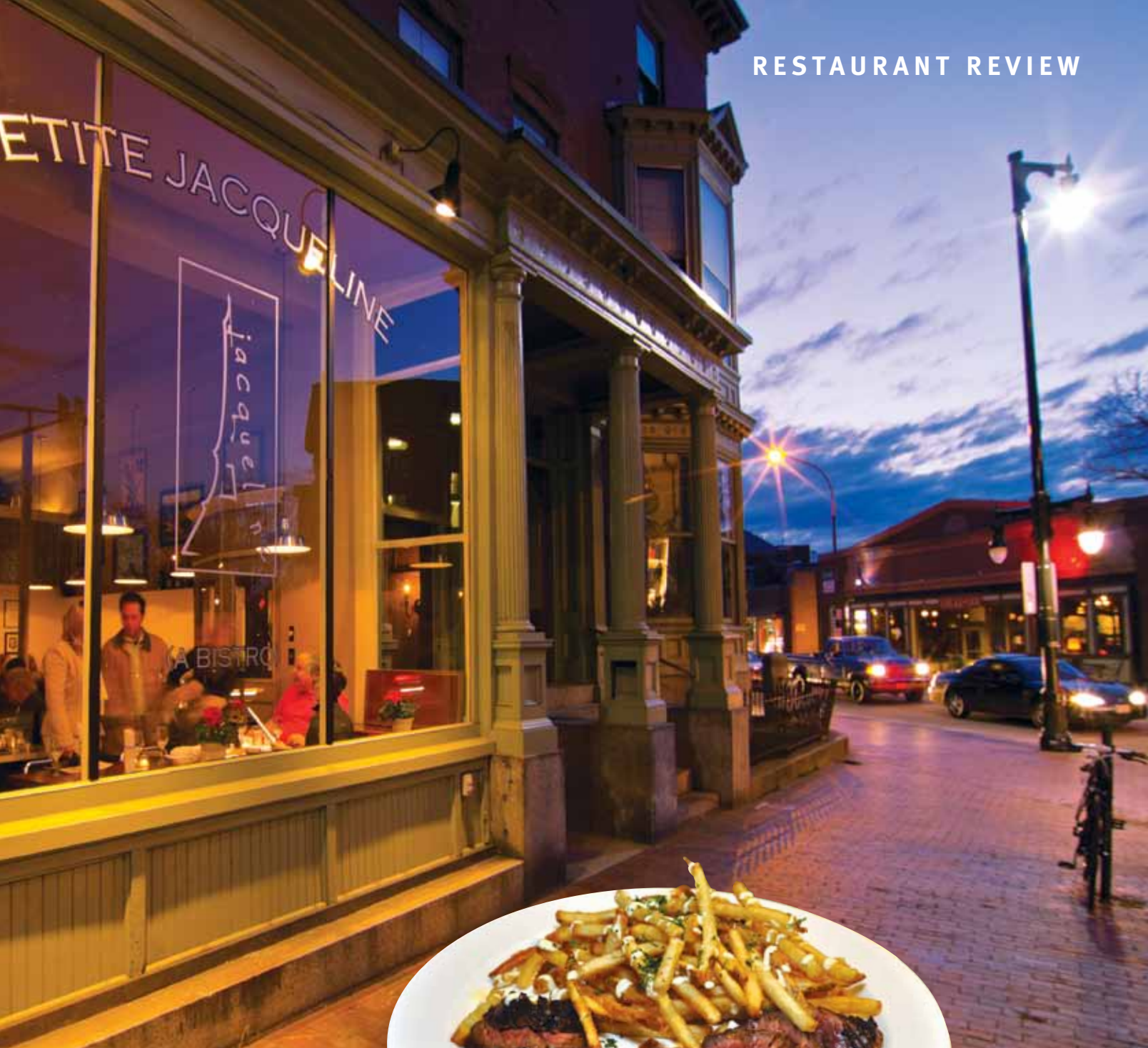


Petite Jacqueline, 190 State Street, Portland
 Tues-Thurs, 11:30 a.m.-10 p.m.
 Fri-Sat until 11 p.m.
 553-7044, bistropj.com

crunch and acidic tang.

My entrée, fluke meuniere (\$19), a pan-seared local fluke with capers and butter draped over a bed of spinach, is beautifully browned, its skin almost crispy. "Meuniere" means "miller's wife," and food cooked in this fashion suggests a homemade dinner prepared richly and creatively using inexpensive ingredients.

The moment my partner's beef Bourguignon (\$18) arrives, our conversation immediately ends as he enthusiastically plunges into the peasant classic with its sa-



very broth, tender meat, and a hearty mix of Maine potatoes, carrots, and mushrooms that soaks up the intense flavor of the beef.

Enhancing the entire evening is a generous carafe of the pinot noir-syrah house red (approximately six glasses for \$20).

The pear crêpe du jour (\$7) makes for a brilliant finish as we savor dipping the delectable fruit into the chocolate sauce garnish.

To Petite Jacqueline we offer *un grand merci* and *voeux pour une longue durée de vie* (at least as long as the ninety years currently enjoyed by its namesake)! ■