

## Dining on the Avenue Ta-boo, Palm Beach's In-Town Destination

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Randall Murray

Ta-boo is an institution in Palm Beach, with a legacy of tradition and a notable history. It embodies the classic ambiance of a private club: burnished old wood, a fireplace dancing in one room, a long bar that is a tradition in and of itself. It's hard to think of this finely polished Worth Avenue gem as a "bistro," but that's what it is. And the formula is a successful one. After all, Ta-boo is one of the grande dames of the Avenue dining experience. It's 60 years old this year.

But calling Ta-boo a "bistro" is like referring to Chateau Margaux as a "winery." There is something special, a tried and true patina about the place.

And first, there is the food. Ask day manager Richard Whitaker to define Ta-boo's cuisine and he panics. "I get phone calls from people asking me what kind of food we serve and I think to myself 'Oh, my God,' then tell them it's American bistro informed by French cooking."

Ta-boo is built on a twin foundation. "We have to be good and we have to be incredibly consistent," says Whitaker. "I like to say that if you liked our rack of lamb in 1987 and come back tomorrow, you'll still like it."

One point of evolution is the growing list of wines by the glass. That list has doubled in recent years and will continue to expand. Why? "We sell more wine by the glass than liquor, dollar for dollar," Whitaker notes.

Ta-boo has held court on Worth Avenue since 1941. The present owners are the well-respected Nancy Simmons and Franklyn deMarco, the latter known affectionately as <sup>3</sup>Mr. D.<sup>2</sup>

Ta-boo has attracted the wealthy and famous since it was born, and has been action central since the beginning, hosting Old Guard Palm Beach every season as well as celebrities from the past such as the Duke and Duchess of Windsor and Frank Sinatra. Still one of Palm Beach's preeminent places to see and be seen, Ta-boo embraces such contemporary celebrities as soap star Susan Lucci, singer Celine Dion (with her baby, of course), race car driver Jeff Gordon and gravelly rocker Rod Stewart.

Whitaker, a sous chef for two years before becoming day manager four years ago, has built up a nice immunity to star fever. But recently, one visitor jogged his blood pressure. Walking through the restaurant he heard a distinctive voice, throaty and sultry, ordering a club soda. He turned to the woman and said, "I'll bet you get compared to Kathleen Turner a lot." She replied, "Yes, because I am Kathleen Turner."

Ah, Ta-boo. There's a lot to love there.