



fresh faces

# Citronnelle

MODERN FRENCH CUISINE



For Susan Louie and Rafael Perez, their new restaurant Citronnelle is a love story. The couple spent their lives in New York: she in the fashion industry as a design director, he as a chef for several trendy restaurants in the city. When friends moved to Lancaster, the avid travelers began spending occasional weekends here when they weren't circling the globe. Trips to the area became more frequent, until finally they bought a house, and then an Orange Street storefront. They realized they were finally ready to make the commitment to Lancaster, and to each other. It was on their honeymoon trip to Africa, where they sipped citronnelle (lemongrass) tea, which offered the name for their new venture.

Inspired by their travels and experiences, their new restaurant serves "Classically

prepared French cuisine with a global twist, incorporating Asian and African ingredients," says Susan. "We love traveling and applying what we learn to our cooking and decorating." Classically trained Rafael worked for a number of renowned New American, European and Asian restaurateurs in New York, including Iron Chef Masaharu Morimoto. His experiences coalesce into his internationally inspired menu, with ingredients sourced close to home. Her fashion sensibility is exhibited in the intimate 500-square-foot space, with dark wood paneling, bronze metallic touches, and retro style chairs to create a cozy mid-century ambiance. "The decor should be as thoughtful as the food, because the it adds to one's overall experience," says Susan.

Although the couple's menu is designed to appeal to every palate, with vegetarian and vegan options as well, they suspect local favorites may become their Lentil and Merguez Terrine with spicy harissa oil or their Chicken Bisteeya. For dessert, they're offering a signature Citronnelle soufflé. "It has notes of lemongrass, and is served with a coconut creme anglaise and a citrus tuile cookie," says Susan. Eventually, the couple hopes to add a small garden dining space filled with their own pots of lemongrass to continue to serve as inspiration, and as ingredients.

*Citronnelle is slated to open early summer.*