

# OVER THE MOUNTAIN JOURNAL

## Turning the Tables

By Donna Cornelius

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The restaurant that was formerly Veranda on Highland has new proprietors, a new menu, a new look and a new name.

And like the ingredients of a good dish, all the changes combine to make Galley and Garden an appealing new option for Birmingham diners.

Chef James Boyce and his wife, Suzan, opened Galley and Garden in October at 2220 Highland Ave. South.



James and Suzan Boyce, top, own three restaurants in Huntsville. Galley and Garden is their first venture in Birmingham. Journal photos by Lee Walls Jr.

Although this is the Boyces' first restaurant in Birmingham, they're well known in the culinary world.

James started his career at New York's Le Cirque, where he worked for six years under French chef and restaurateur Daniel Boulud. He later headed west to The Phoenician in Scottsdale, Ariz., earning a Best Chef of the Southwest nomination from the James Beard Foundation, and then to Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas.

He also was top chef at Loews Coronado Bay Resort in San Diego and at Studio restaurant at Montage Resort and Spa in Laguna Beach, Calif.

James and Suzan are both graduates of the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y. But they attended at different times and didn't meet until both were at Montage Resort and Spa.

The couple moved to Huntsville in 2007 and started Boyce Restaurant Concepts. They own three restaurants, all in downtown Huntsville: Cotton Row, Pane e Vino, and Commerce Kitchen.

"We were looking for a lifestyle change," James said about the move to Alabama. "Huntsville seemed like a great place to raise our family and own our own business."

The Boyces have two children, a 9-year-old daughter and 7-year-old son, who share their parents' fascination with food.

"We're raising true gourmands," James said. "They're not happy with one-course meals."

Ed Hardin, a Birmingham attorney who owns the antebellum Highland Avenue building that housed Veranda, approached the Boyces about bringing their brand to Birmingham, James said.

"Birmingham is an awesome restaurant town," the chef said. "There's so much variety here – and a larger population density."

While the Boyces are old hands at opening restaurants, it's never a simple task, James said.

"We make it hard on ourselves because all of our restaurants have different concepts," he said.

What diners will find at Galley and Garden is a menu with modern American-French dishes.

While offerings will change with the seasons, guests might expect to find starters like Skillet Cornbread with pork belly, Alabama white barbecue sauce and a farm egg, or Lager-Roasted PEI Mussels with Spanish olives, Andouille sausage, jalapeno and cilantro.

Main courses on the menu recently were Carolina Almond-crusted Rainbow Trout with maple sweet potatoes, wilted spinach and sage brown butter; Maple Leaf Farms Duck Breast with wild rice, pickled cherries, celery root, kale and duck jus; and Braised Hereford Beef Short Ribs with parmesan grits, Portobello mushrooms and garden herbs.

"We never want to be stagnant," Suzan said.

The restaurant might bring in ruby red trout or fluke from North Carolina or rabbit from the Tennessee Valley, James said. But he loves the bounty in the Birmingham area.

"There are so many farmers around here," he said. "Our purveyors keep us updated weekly on what's available."

Galley and Garden also has an extensive wine list, said Suzan, a sommelier.

"We offer quite a variety of wine – probably 750 to 800 selections," she said. "Our wine list is all-encompassing and worldly, from every major region. You can get a \$1,500 bottle from Bordeaux or a \$30 bottle from Portugal."

Suzan said the restaurant's staff members are educated about wine and are happy to offer suggestions to guests.

"We don't want choosing wine to be intimidating," she said, adding that many Birmingham diners are interested in what's new and different.

"They tend to drink more French wine here," she said.

The restaurant got an extensive remodel. The Boyces worked with architect Jeff Dungan of Dungan Nequette on the design. Suzan and designer Grant Trick came up with the décor.

**Link:** <http://bit.ly/1tkTVzZ>

The updated interior is inviting and understated with neutral colors, lightened hardwood floors and carpets, and banquettes as well as freestanding tables. Diners can eat at granite-topped tables near the new bar, in more private rooms or outside on the patio or balcony.

Foodies will love the windows that give them a full a view of the kitchen, which James said combines a "home and industrial" vibe, and of Chefs Steve Fressel and Sean Kane and their staff at work.

Outside, Birmingham garden designer June Mays is planting herbs and vegetables that will go from garden to table once spring arrives.

Galley and Garden serves dinner from 5-10 p.m. Monday through Saturday and has Sunday brunch from 10:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

On Feb. 11, the restaurant will begin serving lunch Monday through Saturday from 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

"We want this to be a very exciting restaurant," James said. "It's ever-changing."

For more information, visit [www.galleyandgarden.com](http://www.galleyandgarden.com) or check out the restaurant on Facebook and Instagram.

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