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Join THIM OH SKOHO S*mOM, i:00-9IOOPW. ?33 STH 51, SE, 202-544-3620

THE BLOSSOMING OF BARRACKS ROW

by BILLI Jo ZIELINSKI] _____ layered, vegetable and meat stew, as

Imagine yourself surrounded by- fabulous aromas, a rich ambience, your community ...you'll soon find this reality in a new contemporary bistro, replicating a neighborhood gathering place of the chefs native Flemish environs. Belga Cafe will be the first Belgian-French restaurant in the District and Executive Chef Bart M. Vandaele chose Barracks Row because he wanted to be a part of the revitalization and add something brand new to this historic corridor.

Bart grew up in the culinary business. With pots and pans as toys, Bart was raised in the kitchen of his family's restaurant. In the town of Kortrijk, close to the beach and the French border, Bart's talents at a young age were influenced by his surroundings. He studied in Bruges and held various and prestigious executive chef positions in the United States and Belgium. Most recently, he was the executive chef for the Dutch Ambassador to the United States before embarking full time on this new epicurean adventure.

Belga Cafe is a total concept. "I want to have people feel as if they are coming to my house for dinner," Vandaele says. A huge open kitchen will be a focal point with a 14 place setting communal table, usually known as the chefs table, designed for people to meet and mix conversation. Belga Cafe will seat approximately 65 inside, 20 on a patio and a 10 at a bar featuring a range of Belgian beers on tap and an extensive international wine list.

At the Belga Cafe you will find a light menu with no heavy creams. The carte du jour highlights "a classic cuisine with a twist," according to our fine chef and will include hotch-potch, Bart's take on this traditional

well as a variety of vegetarian dishes, including asparagus, the way you taste them in Flandre (asperges à la Flamande). The Euro-fusion items, reflecting the center of Europe, will introduce you to tomato with baby shrimp and entice you with such delightful dessert combinations as cucumber salsa with strawberries and tarragon. "I always try to improve and reinvent myself," says Vandaele, "and I love herbs. ...I love freshness!"

Belga Cafe will offer lunch and dinner daily, with a Saturday and Sunday brunch menu based on waffles and chocolates. But you must expand your imagination about these two decadences, as they can be sour, salty, sweet and not always the main element Vandaele believes that you should always feel that if there were something more, you would eat something more. And if you do eat something more, you should feel energized, not lethargic.

Belga Cafe will be a great place to eat distinctive Belgian and Euro-fusion cuisine, combining an intriguing and cozy atmosphere with exceptional, light and healthy food. Bart M.-Vandaele welcomes you to his new home and although you have to pay for this experience, I believe it is one you will enjoy. Belga Cafe is located at 5148th Street SE. Still in its infancy, keep checking Belga Gate's website for updates: www.belgacafe.com.

Opening in June 2004, Bart will need approximately 25 employees to create a warm and friendly place with excellent food. If you are interested in being a part of this new restaurant, contact Vandaele at 202.297.0849 or Bart@BelgaCafe.com.

Barracks Row is happening! Come see all the new "flowers" lining the streets.