



# Business Bites

By Steve Sears

*Steve Cullman, managing partner of the Bonefish Grill (28 Route 46, Pine Brook, (973) 227-2443) says, of his establishment, "We're polished casual."*

Yep – that just about says it all.

My partner Lucille says that Bonefish "always gets business." Yeah, that too.

When you enter Bonefish Grill, you don't feel like you've entered a chain restaurant. This is fine dining with servers wearing chef coats, cleanliness with the look of a spit-shine, and plate presentation magnifique. "Our goal," says Cullman, "is fine dining selections at casual dining prices."

Achieved.

Okay, so you're looking for the special place to power dine or powwow after work? This is it. Noise level? Well, that depends. You can spend your 4:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. Happy Hour time in the bar and enjoy tunes, food, drink and laughs, or if yours is the quiet, sit down dinner discussion, the dining room promises lower volume and more privacy. Featured are \$1.00 draft beers, half-price house wines and call liquors.

Lucille and I started our evening with Bang Bang Shrimp, a tower of Bonefish's signature appetizer – spicy, thick and crunchy shrimp – side by side with warm bread and a dip consisting of pesto sauce, parmesan cheese, pine nuts and basil. We'd reached heaven early in life. For entrees, I enjoyed the sirloin steak &

crab cake dinner, both grilled to perfection, with a side of chick peas, while Lucille ordered the mixed grill sirloin, scallop and shrimp special, with a side of spinach sautéed in garlic. Dessert? We found room, somehow, to put away a macadamia nut brownie and Crème Brulee.

"Good is a 'fail'," claims Steve Cullman, "I want every meal to be great. We have to be in the top 1%."

Great was our meal, as was the whole experience.

## Baskinger's Looks Forward to Rebounding from the Recession

By Steve Sears

*Joe Argieri has owned Baskinger's in Clifton, a popular deli, caterer and bakery, since 2002. And his business is down – way down.*

"It (the economical recession) is something that affects everyone to some degree," says Joe. That "degree" at Baskinger's, in business for over 80 years, has been a decline in the walk-in crowd for lunch, "about 1/3 since July 2008." He also claims his colleagues have been hurt as well.

Even Baskinger's new bakery is suffering. "Sunday used to be our best day. Now our worst day in the bakery is Sunday. People will make their coffee at home, read the paper online, have toast instead or rolls and doughnuts."

The problem? The bills don't evaporate like water in a steam table. The landlords and energy providers, to name a few, still want their piece of the pie. So, in order to survive, Argieri resorted to measures that aren't favorable. "We had some layoffs, had to cut back on hours and pay, but most of my workers, who have been with me a long time, weren't happy, but understood why I had to do it."

Joe Argieri and Baskinger's motto is: Always give the customer a little more than he paid for. Joe says, "The USA has been around a long time. We're going to wake up in five years and still be here." He has some advice for those who panic. "The media has to feed us some positive signs, but we have hope that the economy will pick up."

Baskinger's is open seven days a week with a steam table of 35 hot foods, 52 salads and reasonable beefsteak catering for \$17.95 per person.

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