

Joel Gordon – Campbell’s Restaurant



Joel Gordon has been working non-stop to provide employment for his staff since the Covid-19 pandemic suspended indoor dining in Philadelphia. As the general manager of Paris Bistro and now Campbell’s Place (both owned by Rob and Vanessa Mullen), Joel has a lot on his plate– and, since the lockdown, a lot to worry about. On top of the physical work his job demands, his mind is always calculating ways to keep Chestnut Hill’s main street vibrant, regulars and new customers fed, and everyone, customers and staff alike, safe. The fruits of his work have kept Campbell’s Place, a Chestnut Hill favorite for four decades, open, as well as expanding from pick-up and take-out only to outdoor dining. Currently, Joel is also working on the Mullen’s new endeavor, Mimi’s Market & Cafe on Evergreen Street.

Not everyone has been supportive of Campbell’s plan for outdoor dining. Some folks have complained that outdoor dining isn’t safe and that the outdoor tables are taking up parking spots. But, for Joel, the outdoor dining isn’t just a nice place for Chestnut Hillers to feel some sense of normalcy and get good food; it also provides a way for his staff to pay their rent, groceries, and car insurance. He knows people are struggling and small businesses are struggling. “Everyone is doing what they can to survive,” Joel says.

Joel and Campbell’s have shown their commitment to their community throughout the pandemic. They fed the workers at Chestnut Hill Hospital, Abington Hospital, the 14th District Police Department, Broad Street Ministry, and have given 150 complimentary meals to individuals and families in need. Joel feels that his livelihood and health are deeply connected to the livelihood and health of others in his community, and that it is important to him to give back.

In August, Campbell’s started Hot August Nights on Friday and Saturday evenings. Joel reached out to some of the musicians that used to perform at Paris Bistro and asked them to do an outdoor set, just a couple musicians at a time, with their own mics. Folks ordered take-out and some sat across the street at the bank to listen to the live music. Patrons at Iron Hill’s outdoor dining enjoyed the music too. That live music was a little piece of Chestnut Hill that many people sorely miss.

Joel is working hard to keep Chestnut Hill a place that people love to live. He wants to make it possible, within safety guidelines, to walk down Germantown Avenue, have a bite to eat, hear some live music, say hi to your neighbors, and finish off the evening with a scoop of ice cream. Joel says that if we want our favorite small businesses and restaurants to exist for us when this pandemic is over, we have to spend the money now to keep them afloat.

In September, Campbell’s will be open to indoor seating, which has Joel measuring the distance between seat backs and trying to find storage for the tables, chairs, and barstools they aren’t using. Indoor dining will only be at 25% capacity, but Joel is actively working to bring back all his original staff from Paris Bistro and then some. He works and worries seven days a week for all the people he considers his community. Joel wants to encourage us to continue to shop locally, partake from local restaurants, and take care of each other, because that is how we, as a community, will survive.