

Well-hidden Delray Beach 'Gem of a Place' Has a Master in the Kitchen... And a Wacky Dane in the Front!



Jorgen Moller, left and son, Chef Christian meet daily to make the never-ending list required to run any restaurant, big or small.

A Family Tradition Lives On... Out of Denmark, a Restaurant With a Heart!

By Diane Phillips

Photo by Kevin Rouse

Nestled away in Delray Beach since 1993 is a quiet little 'gem of a place' that is home to one of South Florida's finest dining experiences. Chef / Owners Jorgen and Christian Moller along with wives Monica and Karin have created a tiny romantic treasure that defines the difference between a good meal and an unforgettable dining experience.

The "Love is spoken here" sign above the open kitchen window, says it all.

"Creating a memorable dining experience is like being in the theater," says Jorgen Moller, who was awarded the IVY Lifetime Achievement Award, nominated by 160,000 of his peers, the Academy Awards of the food industry. "It's a theatrical stage backed up by the excellent food of the highest quality with unconditional consistency. We must also provide exceptional value and treat our patrons like family. Inviting our guests for a birthday dinner and an explosive* desserts, or buy them a bottle of wine, is just a couple ways we let our guests know we are glad to see them."

It's not without reason the quote by Winston Churchill: "We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give" is eloquently displayed on a sign in this restaurant.

The Moller family has been extending their gracious Danish hospitality ever since they opened Prince Hamlet restaurant, in Miami, in the 60s. They have welcomed heads of state, honeymooners, golden

anniversary couples and entire extended families, many of whom have returned again and again. Prince Hamlet became the 83rd largest independent restaurant in the US until it was destroyed by the Miami riots in the early 80s. (There are 850,000 restaurants in the US.)

Jorgen and his family has seen good times and bad, but never lost their willingness to help others. For 33 consecutive years they donated their restaurant 100% free of charge, and helped raise more than two million dollars for charity.

In addition, Florida International University, School of Hospitality Management made Jorgen an Honorary Professor for lecturing the students on his first-hand knowledge of operating one of America's 'top 100' restaurants. He's now on the hospitality advisory board of Lynn University in Boca Raton, Florida.

'The art of giving' is a family recipe that has been a winner for 33 years and has now been passed on to his son Christian who has worked with his father since he was old enough to stand on a milk crate and churn butter. "Christian is the only 34 year old chef in America with 26 years' experience, and we are lucky to have him," Jorgen says. In addition to working with his father, Christian is a CIA (Culinary Institute Of America) graduate and a former under-study of Wolfgang Puck. Jorgen, the most impish Dane to come out of Copenhagen since Victor Borge, still maintains a regular presence in the dining room and is never seen without his trademark chefs white, one white and one black wood shoe, and he guarantees that nothing has been lost in the transition.

"Attitude and attention to details is the difference between success and failure in our business and Christian got it all down pat," says Jorgen.

The Northern European fare begins with a presentation of a Danish Kold Bord. This triple tiered sampling may include North Sea herring, spinach dip with Danish cheese, marinated button mushrooms, European cucumber salad with fresh dill, petit savory beets, curried chicken salad with apples and walnuts, and the famous house special, Gravlax made with a fresh salmon imported only from Norway or Scotland. It is sliced and served on the top tier for every table with a honey mustard dill sauce, capers and red onions.

Then a freshly baked, still warm from the oven, Caraway seed bread with herb butter is presented for your delight. The wine list is extensive, not overpriced. The salads and soups (if you are lucky, it will be carrot) are delicious, and the house specialties give one a rare opportunity to experience the work of a true Master. The herb marinated and roasted two lbs. rack of lamb is carved at your table, a roast duck prepared in a delicate berry sauce, grilled almond crusted salmon, 'tender as butter' brisket of beef with crisp potato pancake, herb infused grilled chicken raspberry. The snapper papillote is Monica's (Jorgen's wife) creation, it's been a best seller for 29 years and so has the baby calf's liver with apples and onions, the veal cutlet 'Oscar' and the Wiener schnitzel. All 16 entree's includes the Caraway bread, the Danish Kold Bord, a striking monument with nine appetizers, homemade soup or flavor laden hearts of romaine salad and the perfectly done seasonally vegetables.

Try to save room for the Danish Kijaffa layer cake made with the family's secret ingredients that Chef Christian won't reveal.

There is one secret he will share: everything has to be fresh everyday, because this restaurant has no walk-in refrigerator or freezer, but just enough refrigeration space to hold today's purchases.

In his career Jorgen has brought a satisfied smile to over four million people one meal at a time, and looks forward to many more in a sweet spot in Delray Beach where even Jerry Seinfeld didn't mind waiting his turn. This is one experience you should not miss.

Reservations are suggested (only 12 tables) at this ZAGAT SURVEY rated 'gem of a place' where the 'SOLD OUT TONIGHT' sign will be hung out on most days of the year. Call the Moller's at (561) 276-4950, I guarantee you won't get a recording!