

# Jean Luc Xcellent



By Karen Amster-Young

Before



After

Ed "Jean-Luc" Kleeffeld doesn't need much sleep. He is constantly on the move, overseeing his restaurants: Jean-Luc in New York, JL East in East Hampton and his newest venture on the East End, J LX Bistro. "I wanted J LX to be a bistro that is accessible, hip and easy-going," says Kleeffeld. "I wanted a place where people can walk in late at night in any attire, right off the beach. I want it to be a place where diners can order an omelette with frites and dine right next to someone, who came from a black-tie affair."

J LX Bistro is all about capturing everything it means to be a bistro. The menu features classic bistro cuisine, such as steak frites, mussels, lobster cakes and quiches. The specialty drink of the house is "The Precaution" – a Bloody Mary named after James Fenimore Cooper's first novel, *Precaution*, which he wrote 100 years ago—while living on the spot, now home to J LX.

Born and raised in New York City on the Upper West Side, Kleeffeld attended Riverdale Country Day School and went on to attend Franklin and Marshall College. He does not have any traditional culinary training or experience and seems amused when he refers to himself as the "accidental restaurateur."

When asked to shed light on how he got into the restaurant business, he talks about his penchant for people and his love for bringing people together. "I realized I was good at bringing people together and knew a network of people that could really impact the success of any business. That, coupled with my love for dining and the entire experience and I knew I had to bring my restaurants to life."

He is known to everyone as Jean-Luc—a name inspired by his French-born parents. His mother is his biggest fan and one of the only people to call him Ed. She dines at one of his restaurants regularly. "My mother always insists on paying, but I always make sure to give her dessert on the house," he says with a grin.

His obsession with the entire dining experience makes him a hands-on restaurant owner. He knows what he likes and what he does not. He is a perfectionist about the dining experience of every patron, who dines at one of his establishments. "I always think about what I would want if I go out to eat," explains Kleeffeld. "I look at the whole experience from the minute someone walks in the door." He is also an absolute stickler for food quality and freshness.

"When people visit one of our restaurants, I take personal pride that when they dine they leave saying that they loved a particular dish," says Kleeffeld. After September 11, though there weren't as many people dining at his restaurants—or any restaurant for that matter. "It was a tough time," he explains. "Coupled with the growing anti-French mood in New York, we certainly felt the repercussions of the uncertain economy and volatile times." He cites his loyal, local following, and private events, as the reasons he stayed afloat during this difficult period.

As proof of his commitment to preserving the local flavor and traditions of Sag Harbor, Kleeffeld recently hosted an event at J LX Bistro with the Edward Deyermond, Sag Harbor's mayor. The goal was to raise money to help "Save the Sign," referring to the much beloved sign in Sag Harbor in front of the local cinema that was recently taken down—



much to the dismay of the local community. The often-photographed vintage sign had fallen into disrepair. According to local officials, it was only a matter of time before the sign rusted to the point of falling, perhaps injuring pedestrians. Klee field wanted to make sure he played a role in bringing this piece of Sag Harbor history back to the community. J LX will be a year-round bistro and presence too.

In addition to running his restaurants round the clock, he is a two-time NYC marathon runner and plays lead guitar in several local blues bands. He is also an avid golfer, who is determined to play the top 100 golf courses around the world. So far, he has played on 42. He describes overseeing his restaurants like "running mini-marathons every day."

■HJM

J LX Bistro  
16 Main St.  
Sag Harbor  
631-725-9100

JL East  
103 Montauk Hwy.  
East Hampton  
631-324-1100

Jean-Luc Restaurant  
507 Columbus Ave.  
212-712-1700



Photos by Rob Rich

Barbara Siemer and Ed Klee field at J LX Bistro for the "Save the Sign" benefit