

# GREENWICH

MAY 2021 | \$5.95

# The Good Life

125

Ways to  
**Live Life  
Better  
Here!**

## PLUS

- ▶ THE SERENITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA'S SEA ISLANDS
- ▶ SAYING THANKS TO MOM WITH STYLE
- ▶ SPECIAL GARDENS TO CREATE WITH YOUR LITTLE ONES
- ▶ SUSHI, ANYONE? A YOUNG CULINARY ENTREPRENEUR BRINGS THE OMAKASE EXPERIENCE TO YOUR HOME



# eat

BY MARY KATE HOGAN • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREA CARSON

## READY TO SERVE

LOOKING FOR A **SWEET TREAT OR EASY AND DELICIOUS LUNCH OPTIONS** WHILE SHOPPING THE AVENUE?  
WE'VE GOT TWO NEW SPOTS THAT NEED TO BE ON YOUR CULINARY RADAR



A midday pick-me-up and fresh-from-the-oven baguettes from Raphaël's Bakery



**left:** Owners Raphaël and Charlotte Dequeker (center) with son, Kelian (left) and Agon Isufaj (right); **right:** Raphaël preparing chocolate kouign amann (part sticky bun part sugared croissant); traditional French meringue; chouquettes—sugar topped pastry puffs that are far too easy to eat

## The French Connection

146 MASON STREET, 203-485-0450; RAPHSBAKERY.COM

**D**reaming of a vacation to Paris? There's a new place to indulge your inner Francophile with no passport needed. Raphaël's Bakery is an authentic patisserie that opened last year by a top pastry chef and his family. "If you stop into our store, it's like a little slice of France without having to travel. Sometimes you come in and everyone is speaking French," says co-owner Charlotte Dequeker, who notes that they have many French customers from around our area. "We want people to experience it with all the senses—smell, sight, taste."

You can't help but be tempted by the aroma of the baguettes and pastries, which come right from the oven into the glass-fronted cases. The kitchen is open to the store, so you can watch Raphaël Dequeker, a third-generation pastry chef, and his crew baking the croissants, brioche, cookies and piping macarons. Those macarons draw your eye with their colorful hues; they're not all perfectly round, which reflects the fact that they were all handmade in house, possibly minutes ago. As for the taste—so delicious! The flaky, buttery pastries are heavenly.

Raphaël's background in town is impressive—for eighteen years he served as the pastry chef at Valbella. But his training began decades ago in the Brittany region of France, when his pastry-chef father would wake him and his siblings at 3 a.m. to help with small chores for the bakery. He left home at age seventeen and went on to do a "Tour de France" of patisserie training, working with top chefs to master his

craft. His experience includes time with Alain Ducasse in Monaco and at Ladurée in Paris. He had long dreamed of following in his father's and grandfather's footsteps by opening a bakery, and then, last year, the pandemic created the right conditions to achieve that goal.

Last March, Valbella closed for six weeks, and Raphaël asked management if he could use the kitchen to bake and then sell pastries in the parking lot on weekends. He started making croissants and Pain au Chocolat. "People loved it so much, they said, 'oh, you need to open your own place,'" says Charlotte. The stars aligned when they found the perfect space on Mason Street and people willing to help them.

Now the whole Dequeker family is working together at Raphaël's. Charlotte's mom makes sandwiches every morning, and she and two of their sons work in the bakery while a third son, who lives out West, helps with marketing. And we can all enjoy the most authentic French pastries and bread. What to try? Two specialties you won't find elsewhere: *chouquettes* (pronounced *shoo-kets*), small, light puffed pastries topped with coarse sugar that are a perfect pairing with the bakery's Shearwater coffee, and *kouign amann*, croissant dough that's twisted with extra butter and sugar and baked until it's caramelized. The chocolate chip cookies are also sinfully good, as are the macarons. Most popular, says Charlotte, is the Napoleon. And the bread is baked with imported Le Moline flour. Be sure to pick up a baguette or a Pain de Campagne while you're there.

