



***1635 On The Avenue,
Restaurant & Spirits***

Story and photos by Mark Shaffer

Lorett Hayes says she ended up in the restaurant business by accident. She met her future husband while working as the director of marketing and sales at a big hotel in St. Louis. The couple ended up settling in his hometown of Central, South Carolina where they opened an old-fashioned ice cream shop. And from there, she says, things just got out of hand.

“People wanted lunch.” She drops the word “lunch” like a brick. “So I began to create lunch. That mushroomed into a full service restaurant that I had for seven years. It just sort of evolved.”

Hayes eventually opened and sold two fine dining establishments in historic Pendleton. After selling the landmark 1826 On The Green a couple of years ago, the couple was bound for the Lowcountry and retirement.

“So, how’s that going for you?” I ask.

She laughs and looks around the tastefully appointed dining room of her latest endeavor.

“Well, it didn’t work,” she deadpans. “My husband’s doing really well at it, but I thought, why not? Why not one more time?”

And just like Michael Corleone, as soon as she thought she was out, she was right back in again – but in a good way. The restaurant and bar business is a social business and the most successful people in it are the ones out on the floor and behind the bar greeting customers and swapping stories with their regulars. They know your name and remember your favorite



e dish and preferred cocktail. And owning a restaurant is a great way to get to know people.

“I really missed the community,” she says. “I knew no one. Where I came from I knew everyone and everyone knew me. I really missed that small town thing where everyone knows your name, knows what you’re made of. So, here I am.”

Don’t let the white linen on the tables fool you. She eschews the term “fine dining.”¹⁶³⁵ is very much what Hayes calls “a casual dining experience.”

“This is who I am,” she says. “I like to sit down with a tablecloth. It’s a detail and details mean a lot.”

That attention to detail is evident in every aspect of the place from the simple, understated décor to the house made salad dressings and the eclectic selection of wines.

This is an intimate space with a maximum capacity of 40 diners. Weather permitting; another 22 seats are available on the sun-splashed patio facing Port Royal's wonderful Bird Sanctuary and Nature Preserve. Hayes offers a full bar with a classic approach to cocktails. Order your martini or Manhattan with the confidence, says Hayes. "But if it takes a blender and an umbrella, we don't do it." Bravo.

As for the food, expect flavor - lots and lots of flavor.

"I love to cook Creole and Cajun," she says. I love to cook Mediterranean. I love all those flavors. No one's ever going to accuse me of serving bland food." Hayes' own interpretation of the ubiquitous Lowcountry classic, Shrimp & Grits, is a perfect example. The shrimp comes swimming in a Cajun cream sauce along with plenty of Andouille sausage served over smoked Gouda grits – Mardi Gras on a plate. Looking for a little comfort on a chilly winter's day? Did "smoked gouda" set off a cowbell in your brain? Perfect. Try the soon-to-be-legendary Smoked Gouda Macaroni with bacon and creamy Parmesan sauce.

Table Talk

The Moveable Feast convenes at 1635 On The Avenue on a bright fall day to sample some of Loretta Hayes' favorite dishes. Today's team includes my wife and culinary beacon, Susan and *Lowcountry Weekly*

Publisher Jeff Evans and Editor Margaret Evans. We're seated at a four top at the front corner with a lovely view of the patio.

"Let's get started," says Loretta.

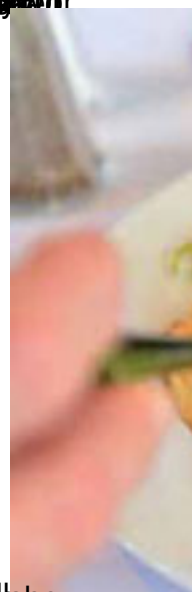
Starters: Escargot in white wine, butter and lemon topped with Parmesan served with



fresh, healthy, and delicious. It's a great way to enjoy the flavors of the region. The food is made with fresh ingredients and is served in a beautiful setting. The wine is also made with fresh grapes and is a great complement to the food. The overall experience is a great one and is highly recommended.



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