

Chandler brings the prime steakhouse to Boise

An interview with Rex Chandler, Proprietor of Boise's award-winning Chandlers Steakhouse

By Nancy T. Gordon

What inspired you to open Chandlers Steakhouse in Boise's downtown?

CHANDLER—Opening this restaurant was the rewarding culmination of decades of work. I have been a restaurateur all of my adult life and owned several fine-dining restaurants in Hawaii and California prior to moving to Ketchum nearly 15 years ago to raise my son—a choice I still consider to be one of the best decisions I've ever made. I absolutely love Idaho. It's my new paradise. I am proud of the success of my Ketchum restaurants—



Chandler's and Baci Italian Café—and those ventures gave me the perfect vantage point from which to observe the Boise market while waiting for the perfect time and opportunity to create a distinctively different dining experience.

What is it about the prime steakhouse concept that made it the right fit for Boise?

CHANDLER—I felt that Boise was ready for a true steakhouse with the perfect balance of upscale cuisine, professional service, and an inviting interior capped off with soothing, live jazz. Quality speaks for itself: our menu is based on the classics— whether it be escargot, Maryland crab cake, oysters Rockefeller, prime New York steak, or a chocolate soufflé. I want to impress you with unparalleled cuisine, consistently served to you perfectly prepared, hot, and on time. I wanted the restaurant to be the ideal place for those seeking a reliably superior experience that would raise the bar on fine dining in Boise.



What makes your menu unique?

CHANDLER—There is nowhere else in the Treasure Valley that serves the same caliber of premium-quality meats and fresh seafood that we do. Our corn-fed prime beef is sourced from the Midwest while the American-Kobe beef comes to us from Idaho's own Snake

River Farms.

One of the key components to serving prime meats properly is our 1800° broiler ovens. These temperatures caramelize the high level of marbling in the steaks and creates that sweet and juicy flavor that brings customers back time and time again.



While our prime steaks are our signature, a growing percentage of our business comes from our seafood selections. Serving delicacies from the sea has always been my passion. I have been buying from many of the same purveyors for decades and— thanks to FedEx— we fly our selections in within 24 hours of catch. I can't imagine anyone serving a better selection with greater quality than we do here at Chandlers.

The look and feel of Chandlers sets it apart from other restaurants as soon as you walk in the door. What were your priorities for the design?

CHANDLER—It actually starts before you walk in the door! We are the only restaurant in downtown Boise that offers complimentary valet parking. It makes a statement that you are about to have relaxing evening, starting with not having to drive around looking for a parking place.

And, yes, I made a considerable investment in our interior design as I wanted every aspect of the dining experience here to be relaxing. Our open-air décor features an earth-toned color palette accentuated with the glow of sensual blue lighting and plush booths. A key design element is the horseshoe-shaped martini bar specifically designed to create social interaction. Most diners like to stop at the bar for our famous 10-minute martini and to chat with a few friends before having dinner. We also have event/meeting rooms as part of the restaurant itself with just the right amount of privacy and technology (including audiovisual and wireless Internet) for business meetings, holiday parties, and other group gatherings.

For having been open just a little over a year, you've already received several awards. Can you tell us a little about those?

CHANDLER—We just received Wine Spectator's Award of Excellence for 2008 and were named the winner of the Idaho Statesman's Best Fine

Dining Award. We also won Best Classic Martini in the 2008 Martini Mix-Off thanks to Pat Carden, our master mixologist known as Boise's quintessential barman. Those awards are great, but the incredible customer response we receive and the fact that we have met the locals' needs and expectations is the most gratifying. We have created the right concept for Boise at the right time.

What made the restaurant's location in Hotel 43 strike the right chord with you?

CHANDLER—It wasn't merely the geographical location, though that was a key component. When the developer team of Rick Clark, Ken Pursley, and Dave Wali showed me the location with the idea of converting the old Statehouse Inn to a boutique hotel with an upscale, independent restaurant, I knew instantly that I had found my dream project. After evaluating the Boise market for ten years looking for the right property, the right location, and the right business opportunity,

I knew this was it and these were the right people to help make it happen.

Speaking of chords, I can't think of anywhere else in Boise that features such a high-end dining experience and live music. How does the live music figure into the ambiance and atmosphere of Chandlers Steakhouse?

CHANDLER—It was always an integral part of my vision... I call it "the icing on the cake." It's a dynamic element in the creation of a special evening. I have incorporated live music into a number of my previous restaurant concepts and know what a powerful impact it can have when done properly. I was fortunate to meet local music legend Kevin Kirk and asked him to be our Music Director. Together, we have added to Boise's nighttime landscape live jazz six nights a week starting at 6:30 p.m. The evenings start with Kevin's incredible piano and, at 8:30, other local and nationally recognized jazz musicians bring up the energy level a bit.



Is there anything else you'd like us to know?

CHANDLER—Creating and running restaurants is not just a profession to me—it has been my passion and my life's work. I am honored by the success of Chandlers Steakhouse and am deeply committed to doing what I can to help foster downtown Boise's exciting growth.



CHANDLERS
STEAKHOUSE

Address: Hotel 43, 981 West Grove Street, Boise
Phone: 208.383.4300 Web: ChandlersBoise.com
Hours: Open for lunch Monday thru Friday at 11:30 a.m.
Dinner nightly at 5:30 p.m. Live jazz Monday thru Saturday