



SOPHISTICATED SOUTHERN TRADITION REDEFINED

THE FOOD

Chef McConnell's eclectic take on Southern staples translates to a scratch-made menu at Red Pony that's reimagined bimonthly, challenging patrons to embrace a tasty rainbow of seasonal ingredients. This includes as many local Tennessee products as the staff can get their hands on, including Springer Mountain Farm chicken, the Old Spencer Mill grits used in their Shrimp & Grits dish, and the piquant Allenbrooke Farm pepper jelly paired with fresh scallions in their "Grit Balls of Fire" small plate.

THE FEEL

The richness isn't all in the food, either. Rough, vibrantly hued brick walls; tufted, scrolled leather booths; wooden tables and floors in warm tones and contemporary artwork that gives a nod to the restaurant's namesake as well as Tennessee and Southern culture in general create an upscale, contemporary environment. The two-level establishment, which features full dining rooms and bars on each level in addition to a lounge and al fresco dining on the patio upstairs has an august yet approachable vibe, with



THE CHEF

Ten years later, the man who at one time envisioned a future in law and politics has found himself continually refining a sparkling downtown Franklin gem. Since its opening, Red Pony Restaurant has accumulated a spate of accolades, including Open Table 2014's awards for Best Food, Best Service, Best Overall and Best Contemporary American, plus Pick of Williamson 2013's Best Restaurant to Take a Date. As a Rives, Tennessee native reared in the kitchen and well versed in the family horse training business, McConnell cleaves close to the sophisticated Southern fare he was raised on but incorporates a far-flung world of flavor, too. Some tastes hail from his travels with the family business around the Southeast, others from his post-secondary education at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, and more yet have been gleaned from his own travels abroad. Ever the entrepreneur and in love with a challenge, McConnell has opened four more unique restaurants following Red Pony's success.

If you ponder what sets a restaurant apart from the others, it's not in the branding, the social media hype or even necessarily the location. You can mix together what you think is the perfect recipe for success and still not achieve it because two fundamental ingredients are missing: a fierce love of food and a true love of community. Red Pony Restaurant's Owner and Executive Chef Jason McConnell wasn't taking chances in his first business endeavor back in 2006, adding liberal helpings of both from the start.

Add to this a mountain of fresh local produce, and a picture of what's made the restaurant so successful begins to emerge.

As Chef McConnell's travels continually add to the palatable array of dishes offered, you'll see their fruition in main dishes like Hickory Grilled Cowboy Ribeye sided with papas bravas, a potato dish native to Spain, starters like fresh Hummus served with naan and za'tar spiced olive oil, or Okra & Shishito Pepper Masala, a heady mix made with savory Indian spices, ginger, cilantro, roasted tomato and caramelized onion.

An extensive list of wine offerings, handcrafted cocktails and beers add yet another level to the Red Pony experience, delivering the perfect pairing for every dish. The proverbial cherry on top of this sundae is the venue's dessert menu, a menagerie of delicacies ranging from an almost-traditional Southern Strawberry Shortcake with vanilla bean ice cream, butter cake and bourbon macerated strawberries to Key Lime Pie with pecan-graham cracker crust and Mai Tai meringue, as well as Triple Chocolate Cheesecake ringed in Oreo cookie crust and topped with raspberry coulis—because of course, there simply must be cheesecake.

patrons observing no formal dress code requirements but subtly discouraged from donning baseball caps, flip flops and the like, further adding to the elegant experience diners have come to expect from the Red Pony. It's also a completely smoke-free business, both inside and outside on the patio.

Red Pony's staff is the final ingredient in the deliciousness that is this restaurant. With a keen awareness that exceptional service goes hand-in-hand with exceptional cuisine, each staff member is painstakingly trained to attend to guests' needs with the goal of a mind-blowing experience being the only acceptable outcome. From management down to every member of daily staff, they're a team that love what they do, and who they do it for. It shows.

Red Pony Restaurant is open Monday through Saturday evenings, with dinner served from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 5 p.m. to 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Both bars open for service at 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Visit at 408 Main Street, Franklin.

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Mon.-Thurs. 5pm-10pm
Fri.-Sat. 5pm-11pm

The bar opens at 4pm

