**COOPERATIVE LIVING, August 2007**A Restaurant to satisfy your appetite and senses in one experience (continued)

As Barbara explained, they surveyed the community to help them develop the menu and their new business.  Margaret discovered that people like their steaks differently in South Boston than in Portland, even down to the size and cut of beef.  The result of this thorough planning and research is BISTRO 1888, which derives its name from the ca. 1888 dry good building that has been tastefully remodeled and features artwork by Barbara’s dad (renowned painter and sculptor Bob Cage).

Chef Margaret strives to serve the freshest meats, seafood and vegetables available in order to bring out their natural flavors.  She selects fish flown in daily from Hawaii and fine beef delivered from California.  Margaret believes that to deliver an exquisite dish you have to start with exceptional ingredients.  This includes roasting her own red peppers and creating a demi-glace (French spelling)  sauce, sometimes taking as long as five days to simmer to perfection.

The menu is extensive, featuring  45 different items.  It would be difficult for even a finicky eater not to find a treat among the vast array of appetizers, salads, handcrafted pastas, steaks, seafood, combination dishes, and even some vegetarian entrees.

For my dinner, I selected crispy friend oysters for an appetizer and a rack of New Zealand lamb for the entrée.  Both dishes were beaming with flavor.  The lamb was presented as a stacked teepee resting in a demi-glace sauce, which included gorgonzola cheese and port wine.  The sauce was incredible.  Once I cut into the lamb, I felt guilty even choosing to use a knife due to its tenderness!  Sometimes after a great meal, dessert can be a disappointment.  Not at BISTRO  1888, especially if it’s strawberry shortcake made with vine-ripened local strawberries.  There were other desserts, but who can resist fresh strawberries?

Over the last 30 years of travel, I have been fortunate to have feasted in some of the best restaurants in the world, but there are several things that set BISTRO 1888 apart from other eateries.  First, of course, is the quality and wonderful taste of the food.  But for restaurants to be really outstanding, they should offer more than just delicious food.  The entire dining experience should also produce excitement and what I call… culinary energy.  Not only does the tummy need to be content, but all senses need to be sated.  Restaurants that produce that total experience are rare, and BISTRO 1888 evokes that rare energy.

Everyone, including the kitchen and serving staff, is enthusiastic about delivering the total dining experience.  These individuals enjoy serving their patrons graciously, which results in good food and good cheer.  Congratulation to BISTRO 1888.  You are a ‘Blue Plate Legend’.