

# long island LIVING

MARCH/APRIL 2019

## POWER TABLES

*WHERE DEALS ARE SEALED*

FINDING THE RIGHT LEGAL EXPERT



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**OUT OF NYC**

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**FASHIONS**

**PORT JEFFERSON'S**  
**WATERFRONT COOL**



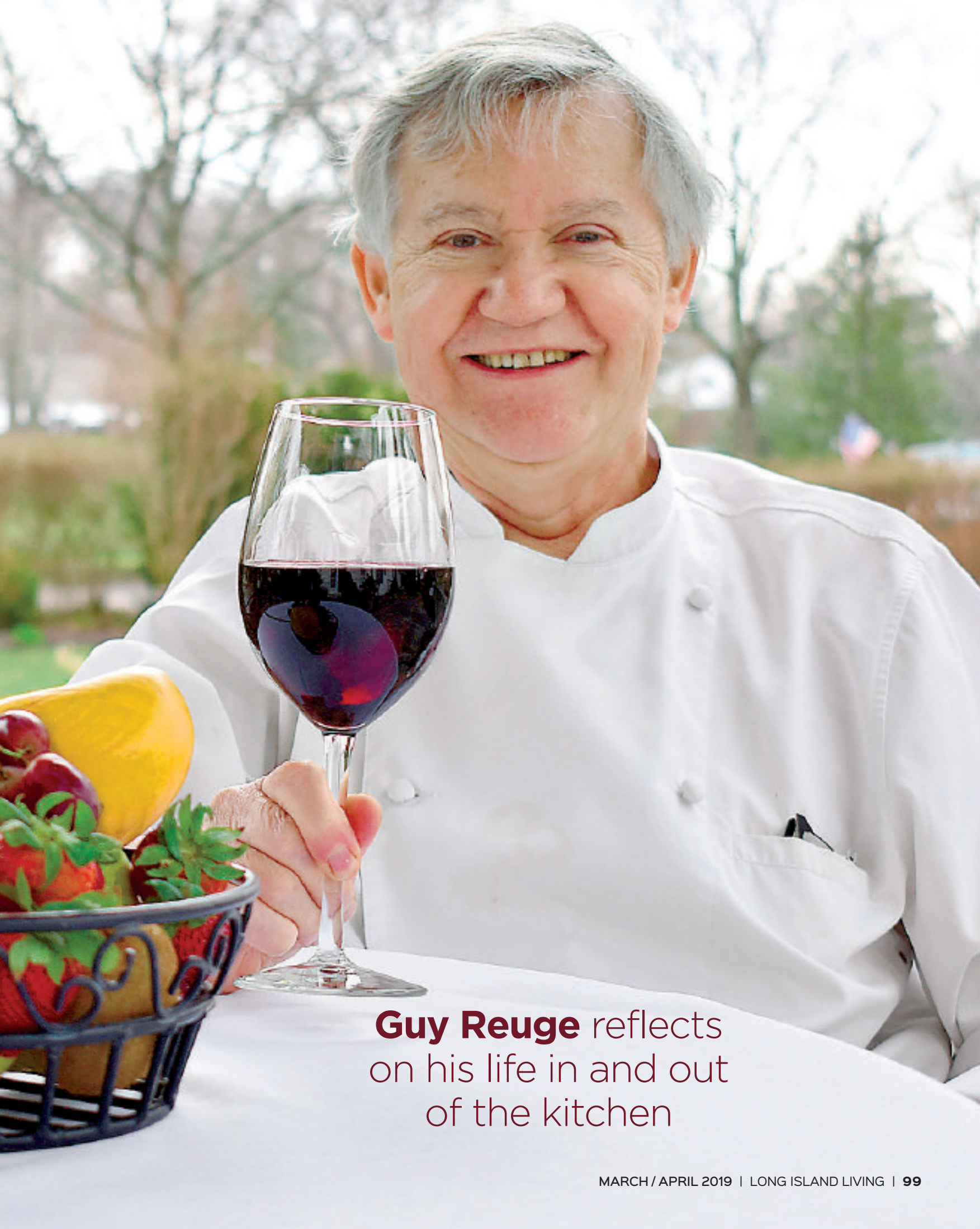
**AS A YOUNG CHILD,** Guy Reuge would gaze out the window at his house in Orléans, France. The city was home to an American Army base, and 10-year-old Guy lived across the street from some U.S. soldiers. ►

# CHEF *magnifique*

By Melissa Argueta







**Guy Reuge** reflects  
on his life in and out  
of the kitchen



The American kids had toys that seemed far more sophisticated than his, and ate food that the boy had never encountered before. “The Wonder Bread was fantastic,” the chef recalls. “And, of course, the barbecues. I said, ‘I have to go to this country.’ ”

And he did, landing in New York City in 1973, where he quickly began working in top restaurants, including Georges Rey, René Pujol and Maxwell’s Plum. Ten years later, Reuge opened

Mirabelle, his French restaurant in St. James. In 2009, he became executive chef for Lessing’s Hospitality Group, moving his acclaimed eatery to the Three Village Inn in Stony Brook, and later opening Mirabelle Tavern on the same site. In 2015, he created the menu and became executive chef at Sandbar in Cold Spring Harbor.

The lauded chef — he has won France’s La Toque d’Argent (the Silver Toque), been named chef of the year by Maîtres Cuisiniers de France and been nominated for James Beard Awards — recently celebrated his 10th anniversary with Lessing’s, which operates 17 wedding and catering venues, 10 full-service restaurants and a historic hotel on Long Island. We caught up with Reuge at Mirabelle Tavern to discuss his career milestones and plans for the future.

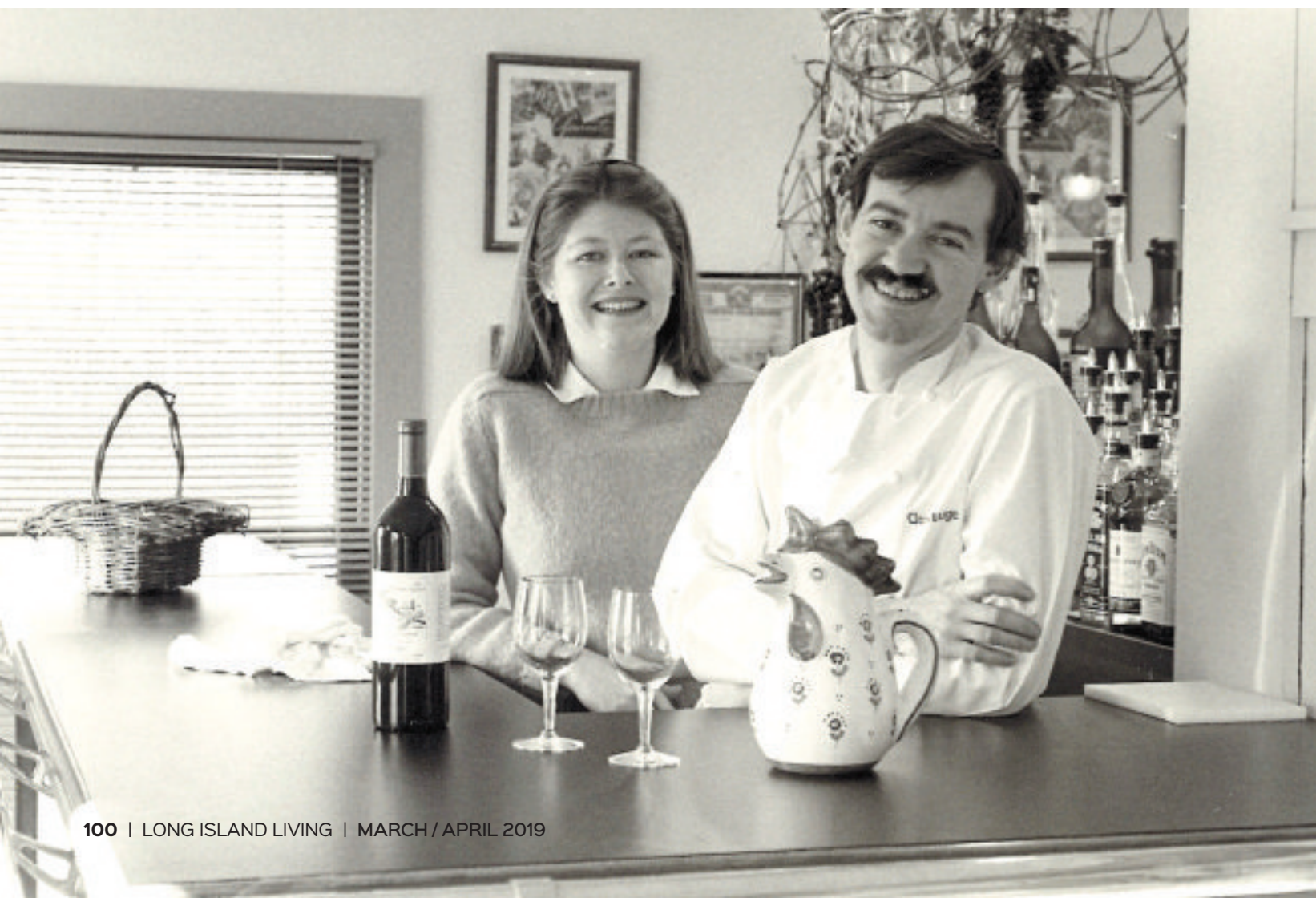
Born in Normandy, France, Reuge turned a love of cooking into a culinary career that started when he was 14, landing an apprenticeship at Restopouce, a small restaurant in Orléans. There, he learned everything from cooking and creating pastry to making charcuterie.



**Left: A 7-year-old Guy at school in France.**

*Photo credit: Reuge Family*

**Below: Maria and Guy Reuge at the first Mirabelle in St. James just after it opened in December 1983.**





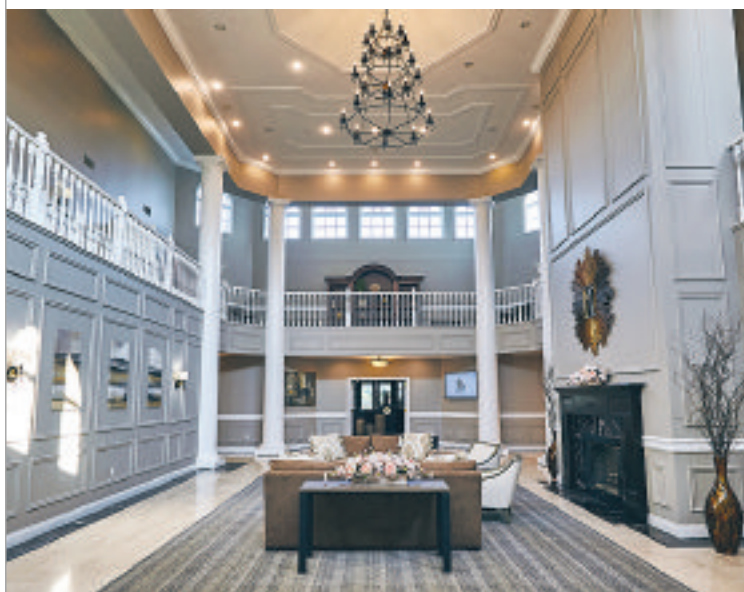


Top, from left: Reuge in the dining room of the first Mirabelle in St. James; grilled octopus with chorizo at Mirabelle. Middle: Mirabelle Restaurant in Stony Brook; Reuge at Manhattan's James Beard House. Bottom: Reuge in the kitchen of Mirabelle at the Three Village Inn; Mirabelle's duck liver and foie gras mousse.





This is what the *New* concept in private country club life looks like



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While completing his French military duty in 1972, Reuge was assigned a job at the École Polytechnique in Paris. There, he cooked for the president and other dignitaries, including Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, who was finance minister at the time and would become president of France two years later.

After working in restaurants in France and Switzerland, he made his way to the United States. "One day I saw this ad looking for a chef," he says. "Arriving in New York, I cannot describe it. It was fabulous. I was young; I wanted to travel and to see the world. I never thought I would stay here."

That all changed when he met his future wife, Maria Harrison, who was working as an editor at Gourmet magazine in 1975. Gourmet's head chef, Sally Darr, asked Reuge to test recipes for a cookbook called "Gourmet France." He also accepted her offer to become chef at a restaurant she owned, La Tulipe, one of New York City's most revered restaurants in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Reuge soon made a name for himself as one of the region's top chefs. However, he decided to go out on a limb, launching Mirabelle Restaurant with his wife in 1983, situating it in a restored farmhouse in St. James. Reuge says he managed to open the restaurant on a shoestring budget, even using his own table in the restaurant kitchen because he couldn't afford one. The menu was small and featured local produce that he used in traditional French dishes.

"We took a chance and we were young," he recalls. "My passion was to use the local product — in French, it's 'le terroir' — meaning 'of the ground.' I got lucky that I met a farmer who did not live far from here and he started to work with me."

It wasn't long before food critics and diners were giving three- and four-star reviews and seats were filled to maximum capacity. He was even invited in 2000 by Hillary Clinton — running for U.S. Senate, at the time — to cook at her New York apartment for President Bill Clinton. When Lessing's invited Reuge to become its executive chef and bring his renowned restaurant brand to the historic Three Village Inn, he accepted. Michael Lessing, CEO and president of the hospitality group, calls Reuge's tenure "a tremendous addition to our culinary team."

When Reuge isn't in the kitchen working 12 or more hours a day and splitting his time between his restaurants on Long Island, the chef loves to travel abroad and get inspired by new cuisine, most recently in Croatia and Mexico.

He insists he has no plans to retire, and remains passionate about cooking every day. "I still come to the restaurant with excitement," Reuge says. "I see the product and it's like, 'Oh my God.' " *LIL*

*Melissa Argueta is a writer from Huntington who is a pop culture enthusiast with a passion for epicurean adventures.*