

in Manhattan. Olson has crafted dishes for such notable events as a Tribute to Billy Joel in 1990, the Aspen Food & Wine Classic in 1995 and the James Beard Foundation Dinner in 1991.

Even with Bowers Harbor Inn's gorgeous Grand Traverse Bay and island views, area residents and wine-country tourists come to this elegant spot for what's on the plate—Olson's French-inflected bistro cuisine that's both fresh and refined.

We caught up with Chef Olson for an off-the-cuff chat while he was on his drive home down the achingly beautiful a winding scenic road to the Inn.

What excites you most about returning to Michigan?

We've been going to Glen Arbor for 15 years for summer vacation. To live where you vacation is pretty special. And also, I'm a huge Red Wings fan, so it's been great to be home.

What is one part of your New York experience that you've brought Up North?

After graduating from the CIA in '91, I worked at restaurants in Manhattan. Three of the four were French. Here at Bowers, we'll do that same kind of simple food with really good ingredients—still interesting, but not seven different flavors with a piece of fish. Also, Café Luxembourg in Manhattan was really low key, so lots of celebrities ate there because they wouldn't be noticed. My wife had me start collecting silverware from famous people, so I brought that with me too!

I see locally-raised buffalo from Oleson's farm on the menu. Any chef tricks to cooking successfully with this ultra-lean protein?

I braise buffalo short ribs after a nice sear with a little flour. I braise with lots of wine and little vinegar and I like to put an anchovy in. For buffalo, I like to use a little red and a little white wine, chicken stock and veal stock and braise it real slow in a 250 degrees oven for 3 hours. The meat falls off the bone. That's cooking to me...