

So Much More Than a View

Written by Rebecca Hendrixson • Photography by Gary Baker

Venue Magazine: Tell me about your journey with The Celestial.

Chanaka DeLanerolle: The Celestial has been here for 54 years. I have been the owner for 15 years. I had two other restaurants on the other side of the hill (Mount Adams), and when this location came up for sale, one of my chefs said “You should buy that and make it a steakhouse.” So, I came to look and bought it quite quickly.

It is a very special location to celebrate birthdays and other events but we love the regular day-to-day diners, too.

By adjusting the menu to make it a bit more affordable and by changing the music, we have been able to attract some of the younger clientele. That has brought some new energy.

Venue Magazine: How did you end up in Cincinnati?

Chanaka DeLanerolle: I came to Cincinnati from Sri Lanka in 1982 to attend the University of Cincinnati. I have an uncle here who is a physician and he sponsored my family. We all live in Cincinnati now. I still have a lot of family in Sri Lanka and we have been back to visit many times.

Venue Magazine: Tell us about The Celestial.

Chanaka DeLanerolle: We have four private dining rooms. We can service groups of 10 persons or 25 or 55, and then we give the whole main room for up to 180 persons. There is no extra fee for private rooms and each one has a nice view. Our kitchen is extremely efficient, which is very helpful.

We book a lot of rehearsal dinners, which helps bring in new clientele. We get a lot of rehearsal dinner bookings from rehearsal dinners. That is good word-of-mouth advertising. We try to make private dining booking as simple as possible. Also, I will do my best to adjust to someone’s budget. I will work with them without sacrificing anything.

We have live music Monday (6-9 p.m.), Friday and Saturday (8 p.m.-midnight) evenings. They are local bands, mostly jazz, but we try to mix in some popular music, which the younger clientele prefers. We also have a Ladies Night every Wednesday with food and drink specials.

Venue Magazine: What is a disappointment to you?

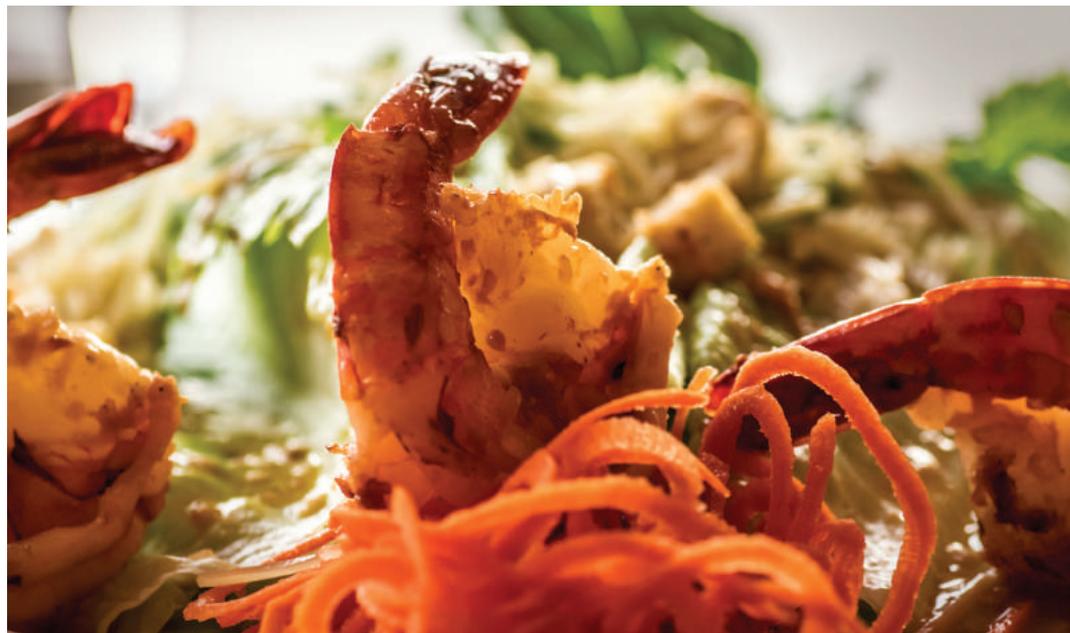
Chanaka DeLanerolle: I feel like The Celestial is a bit under noticed. In such a prime location, we should be able to do better than we do. I think many people know it is here, but have never been in. We want to change that.

Part of the reason may be the setup. Most of the time when you enter a restaurant, the host and bar/lounge are right there. Here, the bar/lounge is in the back. Even people who go into the dining area often do not realize the lounge is there, and what a lovely lounge it is.

We do not advertise extensively but we try to get the name out. Compared to many other restaurants, including those in OTR (Over-the-Rhine), we are very affordable and portions are generous. Plus, we have two large lots with complimentary parking. That is rare in this area.

Venue Magazine: What is a highlight for you?

Chanaka DeLanerolle: The people of Cincinnati are very friendly. Regular clients and friends come in often. That is always enjoyable. At the end of the day, if we have done well, it is satisfying to drive home, thinking “Ah, this is good.” Again, my efficient and hard-working staff make my life easier. There is a lot happening here and it is all important.





Cincinnati is a big, small city. We have everything we need – professional soccer, baseball, football and a lot of activities to do. Our corporate clientele bring their out of town guests here for drinks and/or dinner. It is a great way to showcase the city.

Venue Magazine: How has your business affected your personal and family life?

Chanaka DeLanerolle: It does have an effect. When I first started this business, we had no children. Now we have three daughters. This is a way of life for them. I have a very good staff that helps free some of my time. This job can be very stressful. I want everything to be perfect. The hours are long, but when I get home, I have a lot of love. I am able to forget everything and come back to work the next morning. Otherwise it would be almost impossible.

My father is my advisor. He is my first phone call every morning and my last call before bed. Sometimes he gives criticism and sometimes it is praise, but it is always good advice. I take it all in because I trust him, as does my entire family.

Venue Magazine: What would you like our readers to know?

Chanaka DeLanerolle: I would like them to know that The Celestial is one-stop entertainment. We have good food, good service and it is a nice place. It is also a lot more affordable than people think. As food costs have gone up over the last 10 years, we have managed to keep our prices as low as we can. The pricing is because of what we buy and serve, not because of the view. The great view is just a bonus. I would like to encourage people in the Cincinnati suburbs, like West Chester, Mason and Loveland to check us out, even just come in for a cocktail and enjoy the lounge area. Did I mention that we have plenty of free parking. ❖



The Celestial is located at 1071 Celestial Street, Cincinnati, OH 45202.
For more information, call 513.241.4455 or visit TheCelestial.com.