



**CELEBRATING 10 YEARS!
1998-2008**

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**Award-Winning Charlotte Restaurant Mert's Heart and Soul
Poised For 10-Year Milestone**

Mert's Heart and Soul opened in July 1998. Owner James Bazzelle reflects on impact of local community in reaching 10-year mark.

Charlotte, NC – This July Mert's Heart and Soul, the restaurant with the motto of "Good food, Good Friends, C'mon In," turns 10. For owner and executive chef James Bazzelle, the anniversary is a time of celebration and reflection on Charlotte's growing community.

"I can't believe it's been 10 years," says Bazzelle. "It seems like only yesterday that we opened. My wife Renee and I, along with our entire family, are so thankful for the opportunity to serve the Charlotte community and for all the great people we've met along the way."

Bazzelle says that the increasing foot traffic in Uptown Charlotte and the growing Carolinas region has helped to attract a number of faithfuls to the restaurant. One of these people is Bob Peaseley. He has been a weekly patron since 1998 and says that the good food and down-home feel at Mert's is what keeps him wanting more. "Mert's is a friendly place where everyone knows your name," says Peaseley. "In the 10 years I've been going, I've never left hungry."

The support of the local community is what drives Bazzelle to use Mert's to give back. The restaurant is a frequent supporter of civic causes, including helping several area high school students find their niche in culinary arts and sponsorship of events such as Belmont Center Public Library's annual "May Festival"; Metrolia AIDS Project's "AIDS Awareness Gospel Explosion"; and Athletes United For Youth.

Kutricia Spann, Library Supervisor for the Belmont Center Public Library and Jeff Hood, Executive Director of Athletes United For Youth, say that Bazzelle and his wife have been among their strongest supporters.

"James has been a great supporter of our non-profit charity, Athletes United For Youth," says Hood. "He very much understands that it's important for him to support those who are living in less fortunate or underserved communities, especially our community's youth. I can't thank him enough for his support over the past 8 years."

Spann echoes these sentiments. "James and Renee have been long-time supporters of the Belmont Center Public Library," she says. "They came to our branch library 10 years ago and asked to lend their support. The staff at the Belmont Center library is truly grateful for their service and commitment to the community."

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Bazzelle says that he looks forward to serving Charlotte through Mert's for another 10 years and beyond. "There have been so many people who have walked through our doors over the years," he says. "I've literally seen some of my customers get married and start families. This is a great time to be in Charlotte."

Mert's Heart and Soul will host its 10-Year Anniversary Celebration at The Green Market in Uptown Charlotte on Saturday, June 7th from 11:00AM – 1:00PM. Cooking demonstrations, food samples, music, and culinary activities for kids will be part of the festivities.

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Mert's Heart and Soul is one of the premier dining destinations in the Carolinas. The restaurant specializes in low country and Gullah favorites, including shrimp and grits, southern fried chicken and award-winning macaroni and cheese. Mert's is located in the heart of Uptown Charlotte at 214 North College Street. Mert's is open for lunch and dinner seven days a week. Brunch is served every Saturday and Sunday from 9AM – 3PM. For more information call 704.342.4222 or visit www.mertscharlotte.com.