**CRYSTAL PERSUASION**

*A Passion in Tabletop Elegance*

Easton, Maryland’s newest best kept secret is a curated space brimming with a rarified collection: **Nymphenburg** porcelain from Bavaria; **Lobmeyr** glass and crystal and **Wiener Silber** from Vienna; and **Robbe & Berking** silver from Flensburg, Germany. This graceful boutique, **Benjamin**, gleams with the quiet elegance of a salon, as refined as the wares it showcases. It is Bluepoint Hospitality’s latest enterprise in the historic Eastern Shore town, bringing together manufacturers esteemed by the world’s most discriminating collectors and households.

A foyer furnished with a handsomely appointed seating area opens on to a large space filled with Old World wonders: a pale blue chamber illuminated by French doors at one end and a fanciful vintage, crystal chandelier by Lobmeyr over a fully set table, where the scene is set for gracious dining. Custom cabinetry housing shelf-by-shelf displays of fine crystal, exquisitely hand-painted porcelain, and stunning biscuit-porcelain animal figures, faces a mahogany sideboard laden with breathtaking works of silver beneath a whimsical circular mirror. A fine oriental carpet softens footfalls, and unobtrusive curtains in a crisp taupe-and-white gingham complete the unassuming, elegant design, letting the jewel-like collection of table ware and decorative *objects take center stage*.

Nymphenburg porcelain, a maker founded in 1747 by the Royal Family of Bavaria [and still owned by its heirs,] creates fine dinnerware and decorative figures using painstaking techniques that have remained largely unchanged in the centuries since. [fact: Their porcelain maker is likely the last hand-thrower in the world] From the beginning, the brand has worked with pre-eminent designers of the day, such as Miuccia, Prada, Karl Lagerfeld, and Ted Muehling, whose work endows the collections with an ongoing level of high artistry. Its finely skilled painters can customize pieces and services with personal touches and preferences. They also create the world’s most intricate floral design still in production today: “Cumberland,” first made in 1765, requires up to three weeks of painting per plate.

Lobmeyr, the celebrated Viennese glassware company founded in 1823, produces remarkably thin glass and crystal. In partnership with Thomas Edison, the firm co-developed the first electrical chandeliers in the world; it is also distinguished by its early association with the progressive designers of the *Wiener Werkstatte.* The highly refined profiles of its decanters, glasses, beer mugs, and spherical candy dishes are right at home at Benjamin. And no two are ever the same.

Silver service pieces by Wiener Silber, another venerable firm, gleam with remarkable craftsmanship in a special alloy that is 94% pure. Their unique designs have evolved seamlessly through the ages with their contemporary pieces right at home next to original designs from the 1800’s, when the one-man shop began producing its exquisite silverware. They are complemented by the sleek place settings by Robbe & Berking, of northern Germany, whose more recent forays into yacht design imbue their collections with a nautical sensibility; the captivating silver ‘oyster’ salt dishes are amazingly realistic.

Filled with pieces available in only a handful of U.S. cities, the breathtaking Benjamin offers distinctly European luxury – with a vision for refined entertaining.

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