

SEASONS BISTRO AND GRILLE

IN SEARCH OF SPRING, SUMMER, FALL AND WINTER FRESHNESS

By Ella V. Adalois

When nature is respected in the kitchen the results are rewarding.

The owners of Springfield's Seasons Bistro and Grille, Springfield natives Doug McGregor and Margaret Mattox, are a brother and sister team with a strong commitment to things fresh, seasonal and free of hormones and pesticides. McGregor heads a chef's counter overlooking the kitchen, open for the bistro fan's scrutiny. The menu planning provides upscale touches that make this grille feel sophisticated within a relaxed, neighborhood-style atmosphere.

Whole food diners are no longer satisfied

with plain insipid soups. Seasons offered me a special of the day, a radish-carrot bisque. Perhaps a misnomer, as bisque is a creamier soup with a pureed consistency. Instead, this was a chunky soup that left one with V-8 veggie ravissement. Other spring soups listed on the menu were Tomato Dill and Cream of Asparagus. Last winter Seasons featured a Hearty Chili and a Cream of Mushroom, two of my winter favorites. When they roll out the summer equinox menu this week, there will be a Gazpacho and a Corn Chowder on deck. All are priced at \$3 for a cup and \$6 for a bowl. Other notable starters include an Asparagus and Goat Cheese Tart (\$8) or an

Artichoke and Mushroom Strudel (\$9).

In addition to cooking with what's fresh, this seasonal philosophy provides new experiences for the customary patrons and cook staff. There are staple salads for the regulars like a house mixed green or a Caesar salad. Last winter, Seasons opened with a signature salad of cranraisin, gorgonzola and caramelized onion atop a healthy Mesculan mix served under a balanced balsamic. I tried both their regular salads and their spring spinach salad with feta, walnuts, broiled cherry tomatoes and a bacon dressing. All three more than met my expectations for such classic renditions. This summer, Seasons is planning a Mediterranean twist with olives, artichoke hearts, cucumbers, roma tomatoes and topped with feta cheese. Depending on the sizes and ingredients, salads range from \$3 to \$7.

As for the entrées, inspiration is a day-to-day occurrence so they have specials and pastas of the day. Steak options on the spring menu included a Filet Mignon (\$25), Flank (\$17), and Top Sirloin of Beef (\$17). I sampled the marinated char-grilled sirloin with gorgonzola butter; it had a distinct robust and tangy flavor of one of the world's oldest cheeses

- Gorgonzola. Chicken-Cheese Quesadillas (\$7) and Personal Pan Pizzas (\$8.50) will be on the summer menu. Sides for these entrées include very fresh veggies, herb seasoned red roasted potatoes and cheesy potatoes au gratin.

Always looking for vegetarian options, I dove into a Soba Noodles with Peanut Sauce (\$12). The crisp vegetable medley that framed the noodles was part of the highlight of this plate. In a Thai-inspired dish, I look for a little more coconut and red curry flavor, but I did put away my plate. The menu advertises a seared Wild Salmon but directs the diner to the server for

change ups. I tried a Panko bread crumb crusted Salmon that was especially light, served with thin gaufrette potatoes, crisp asparagus and carrot spears. The ravioli of the day hailed from a pastaria in Columbus' North Market. They were artistically plated with ratatouille that wasn't exactly the French inspired movie version but respectable for the non-francophones.

Scott Gaier, the eatery's manager, also serves as the wine steward calling up a reputable list of flights from Coppola's Director's Cut, California and Chilean cellars. There is also a lovely full bar with seating for expedited service towards the front of the restaurant. The décor



top left: Mushroom Ravioli and Ratatouille ~ middle: the Seasons Lounge ~ left: Pavlova dessert

instantly captures the eye of the leisure guest with warm hues and an evolving light that pools in through the large storefront windows. Chef McGregor completed his culinary training in Vale, Colorado. Not only a fan of West Coast cuisine, he is also an excellent landscape photographer of that terrain. McGregor's photographs along with his cousin's photographs currently line the walls of this bistro and grille. Rotating art exhibits are also a part of the vision for this seasonal place. So



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if you're a working artist this might be a lovely venue for displaying saleable works.

A discussion about a particular photo from Glacier National Park stirred a conversation with my dining neighbor who was on a brief visit to Springfield from Montana. His entrée was a tastefully done Lamb Porterhouse with a fresh mint pesto sauce. (\$24-\$29). Other meaty concoctions that have and will be included are popular Monte Christo, Kofte Sandwiches, Chicken Caesar Wraps, Bison and an assortment of other burgers all ranging from \$7 to \$9. You can get many of these as a half sandwich and

soup or salad combos.

Following a model of fine dining where there is a noticeable balance between the grilled portabella adventurous palate and Midwest meat and potato staples, the menu planning is laced with American regional or international ethnic flourishes. Another star aspect of this menu is an upbeat breakfast fare with scones, cinnamon buns, muffins and Danishes. Between the hours of 7 and 11 a.m. they will whip up frittatas, smoothies, specialty coffees, teas and cocoas for the downtown le petit dejeuner connoisseur.

Not having much room left for dessert after

the ample portioned meals, I was tempted by an off-menu seasonally airy Pavlova from "down under" with fresh blueberries and strawberries. Some highlights of the sweet fare are Chocolate Crepes, Panna Cottas, Aunt Lee Lee's Cheesecake and Jeni's Ice Cream. Desserts run \$4 to \$7.50.

The Seasons concept, food, familial bonds, service and artistic décor are obviously influenced by a staff in love with their craft. The next time I leave my Dayton nest to head to an arts event in Springfield or a road trip towards Columbus, I plan to make a Seasonal trek.

Seasons Bistro and Grille is located at 28 S. Limestone St. in Springfield. The restaurant operates with the theme of 'seasons' in the rotation of original fall, winter, spring and summer menus. Hours of operation are Monday-Wednesday 7 a.m. to 4 p.m., Thursday and Friday 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., and Saturday 5:30 to 10:00 p.m. (bar open until midnight). Closed Sundays. Seasons also offers a full bar. For more information, call (937) 521-1200 or visit online at seasonsbistroandgrille.com

Reach DCP dining critic Ella V. Adalois at contactus@daytoncitypaper.com

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