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WEST VIRGINIA'S PREMIEI CULINARY ARTS MAGAZIN



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ON THE COVER

WEST VIRGINIA'S JAMES BEARD SEMIFINALIST CHEF DRAWS SPIRATION FOR DISHES FROM SEASONS

> **COVER PHOTO BY CANDACE NELSON** PAGE 14





LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to Taste! WV Magazine. This is our second publication from WinterVine Publishing, and its due to the success of Spotlight WV Magazine.

Taste! WV Magazine is the product of a talented team effort to produce a high quality culinary arts magazine. We stand by the quality and integrity of our magazine, and we're excited to take this journey with our readers, exploring your favorite culinary wonders of West Virginia. We want to make West Virginia shine in a positive light just as Spotlight WV does, yet with all the culinary delights you could ask for. In this magazine we'll be featuring your favorite restaurants, healthy tips, famous family recipes, and so much more.

This issue of Taste! WV Magazine will be free to view online, and we will be printing a limited edition of this magazine that will be available throughout West Virginia. If you would like to have a print copy sent directly to your home, you can subscribe to Taste! WV by visiting our website. http://tastewv.com/subscribe/

If you would like to have your favorite family recipe featured in our upcoming magazine, please contact mail@tastewv.com - we'd love to hear from you! There is no charge to feature your family in our magazine, with photos of your family along with your recipe, but there is already a waiting period for submissions. - Joel Bennett, Editor-In-Chief Like us on Facebook. http://Facebook.com/tastewv











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WHAT'S NEW!

Openings

Beef Jerky Outlet expands

www.wv.beefjerkyoutlet.com

Franchisees of this national chain, who also have locations in Lewisburg and North Myrtle Beach, have opened up two stores in the Charleston area: one at the Shops at Kanawha in Kanawha City and the other in Southridge Center in South Charleston. Beef Jerky Outlet sells more than 100 varieties of the snack, including traditional beef and turkey and wild game - elk, venison, buffalo, ostrich, alligator, kangaroo, etc. Other openings are being planned around the state.

Capitol Market adds new vendor

www.capitolmarket.net

Sushi Garden, the latest business to open in Charleston's Capitol Market, is located between The Purple Onion and The Wine and Cheese Shop. The shop offers hand-rolled seafood prepared fresh daily. Customers can choose from a menu, purchase grab and go items or order larger platters.

Build-your-own pizza shop opens in Morgantown www.lotsamozza.com

Lotsa Mozza, a new fast casual pizza joint opened in October on High Street. The restaurant specializes in customizable, brick-oven pizzas. Customers can choose their crust, sauce, cheese and toppings as well as a "finish" - pesto basil, olive oil, old bay butter, blue cheese, balsamic glaze or arugula.

Events

Morgantown Restaurant Week scheduled

www.morgantowneats.com

Students from the WVU Reed College of Media have teamed up with the Greater Morgantown CVB, Main Street Morgantown and the Monongalia Arts Center to conceive Morgantown Restaurant Week. The inaugural event will be held December 5 – 12 and will include approximately 20 establishments offering special menus at discounted prices. Things will kick off with the second Culinary Crawl on December 5 at the Monongalia Arts Center.

Milestone for the Feast of the Seven Fishes festival www.facebook.com/Feast-of-the-Seven-Fishes-377214525767084/

Feast of the Seven Fishes, an annual tradition in Fairmont, celebrates its 10th anniversary on December 12. The event, which was first inspired by Robert Tinnell's book of the same name, celebrates Italian heritage with a cooking school, street fair, meatless meals, homemade wine contest, and more.

Cast Iron Cook-off chefs announced

www.castironcookoff.org

Chef Jason Fleck of 1863 Grill, Chef Scott MacGregor of Snowshoe Mountain Resort, Chef Stephen Owens of Buffalo Diner, Chef Robert Osborn of Mountaineer Casino, Racetrack & Resort, Chef Matt Welsch of Vagabond Kitchen, and Chef Joseph White of Bridgeport Conference Center have been selected as the Rising Star chefs for this year's Cast Iron Cook-Off. The 2015 Cast Iron Cook-off winner, Chef Geoff Krauss of Thyme Bistro, and 2015 People's Choice Award Winner, Chef Pamela Stevens of Mia Margherita Coal Fired Pizzeria, will compete in the Culinary Throwdown. The competition takes place on February 5 – 6 at the Charleston Marriott Town Center.

Charleston Restaurant Week

www.facebook.com/eatlocalcwv

The third annual Charleston Restaurant Week will be held January 25 – 30. Details TBA.



Recognition

BRTCC instructor competing on Food Network show www.foodnetwork.com/shows/cake-wars.html

Steve Weiss, culinary arts program coordinator and instructor at Blue Ridge Technical and Community College, competed on "Cake Wars: Christmas" on Food Network for a chance to win \$50,000. Weiss is part of the team Mistletoes of Mayhem.
**at press time

Elementary student a finalist in cooking contest www.voteforpiper.com

Piper King, a first-grader at Edgewood Elementary in Charleston, was one of the top 25 finalists in the UNCLE BEN'S® Brand Ben's Beginners™ Cooking Contest. She was chosen for her video depicting her recipe, "Piper's Extra Sloppy Joes", which is made with chicken and Uncle Ben's rice rather than ground beef. The five Grand prize winners were announced on their website, Piper being one of them! Winners will receive \$15,000 and a \$30,000 cafeteria makeover for their school.

Way to go Carl!

"Ah, a good hot dog from the land of Hillbilly Hot Dogs. Excellent!" - Carl Douglass



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"WHITE KID MEETS ASIAN FOOD"

RESTAURANT OFFERS UNIQUE TWIST ON TAPAS

BY JOY BROWNING







wo friends who worked in the banking industry for years opened their first tapas restaurant in Beckley in September and are already receiving rave reviews.

"It's been great," owner Adam Taylor told Spotlight West Virginia recently, speaking of the public's reception of Uptown Fusion. "We offer classic, fresh food with a little of my twist to it, and people seem to enjoy it. Most customers who come here have come back a second time, which I think is always a good sign!"

Co-owner Travis Shrout, father of two and a self-proclaimed lifelong foodie, gives credit to Adam for most of the recipes. "It's a collaborative thing though," says Adam. "I cook it and he tries it. Then we talk it out, and this is what we came up with!"

PURE GENIUS

Taylor and Shrout have cleverly concocted a variety of unique tapas including strawberry and cream cheese wontons, and pepperoni and cheese in crunchy egg roll wraps instead of in the usual roll.

Jerika Jones, with Mountain State Centers for Independent Living, told about her office attending Fusion's ribbon cutting ceremony and how she was blown away by those very rolls the first time she had them. "Then a few weeks later, I came and tried the chocolate chips and cookie dough wontons, and they are so good!" I personally think the duo's use of Asian items such as wontons and egg rolls, fused with popular American treats, is pure genius and a bold move, specially in an area lacking in ethnic restaurants. I wonder, what if the twist on these popular dishes doesn't click? Thankfully, most patrons have been adventurous enough to try these, and positive feedback has been pouring in.

Uptown Fusion is what happens "when a white kid is in an Asian restaurant too long," says Taylor, chuckling.

Taylor was that white kid. "I've always been in the restaurant business really," he says. He was a freshman in high school when he started working for Mr. Chow of Young Chow's Restaurant in Beckley. He dated Mr. Chow's daughter, Aileen, through high school, through college, and the two eventually got married and now have a son.

After years of being exposed to Chinese food, "You eventually take your own ingredients," Taylor says. "If you don't have any bread, you find what you can use."

COZY HANGOUT

Recently, Fusion cooked up a variety of tapas for some of us Spotlight West Virginia staff, including our editor Joel Bennett, to sample.



It was cold and rainy that day, but the atmosphere within the new restaurant was warm and inviting. Located literally just steps away from the courthouse in uptown Beckley, Fusion featured a lovely, crackling fireplace and sweet strains of jazz music that serenaded us as we took in the open floor plan, reminescent of some eateries in New York City that hubby and I dined at a couple years ago. Various works of art adorned the walls.

"All that is by Beckley artists," Taylor informed us. "It's a collaborative effort between us and Beckley Art Center."

Fusion basically provides local artists a place to display their work and sell it. "If someone would like to buy the art, we collect the money and drop it off at Beckley Art Center. We give them a place to showcase their art."

Savannah Chatfield, an in-home care provider, described Fusion as "very cozy and nice."

"That is one of our goals," Taylor said. "To provide a comfy place to hang out, almost like hanging out in your room with your buddies. And we chose a tapas style menu, which is meant to share and provoke conversation. Everybody orders a couple of dishes and everybody tries a bit of everything. That way, you can walk around the room as you talk and eat."

SOMETHING NEW

The crab, avocado, cream cheese roll was a delight. Taylor's twist to it was the addition of cream cheese, which I thought went perfectly with the crab and avocado. "Most egg rolls are ground hamburger or shrimp," he said. "This is my version."

The spicy tuna roll had a pleasant zing to it, thanks to Taylor's housemade spicy mayo.

And the shrimp cocktail, which won "Best Appetizer" in this year's Taste of Beckley, featured giant, juicy shrimp with grated ginger and a splash of sriracha in the cocktail sauce "to give it a little kick," he said.

The classic cheeseburger slider was also a hit in our group. Spicy mayo beneath the moist, juicy burger was the twist to this popular American food. "We also have a wasabi burger that is phenomenal," Taylor said. I hope to try that next time, as I am a big fan of all things spicy.

The smoked salmon, cream cheese and spinach egg roll was one of my favorites, although I will admit I was somewhat hesitant to try it at first. Only because I had never had an egg roll with smoked salmon in it before. But, surprisingly, all ingredients fused together perfectly, and after the last bite was gone, I found myself wishing for more.







We ended the tasting session with two types of wontons: raspberry and chocolate chips and cookie dough. They both made for a wonderful dessert! Not overly sweet and served in perfectly crunchy wonton shells.

Shrout expressed the duo's goal of bringing something new and different to the area. "We have a lot of chains here, which is nice, but this is local," he said. From all I have seen and tasted at Fusion, I can personally say they are achieving their dream of doing exactly that, in leaps and bounds.

Alan Kennedy, program director for West Virginia Sleep Centers, spoke of his love for Fusion. "I was probably one of their first customers," he said. "I'm all about the mom and pop thing. If I can support a local business, I'm all for it. I wish that everybody would break away and get away from the chains, the franchise stuff."

I stand with Kennedy. Uptown Fusion is a charming, little restaurant whose owners are not afraid to put their personal touches and unique twists on food that would otherwise be customary and boring. If the local restaurant industry were a sea, they would be the pirates - bold and different and always gung-ho for a new adventure. I find this so appealing and have nothing but best wishes for them as they strive to make their mark in Beckley.

For more information, call 304-573-6887 or like Uptown Fusion on Facebook.









ne West Virginia chef has been named as a semifinalist for a James Beard Foundation's award for the past 10 consecutive years.

Chef Damian Heath, chef at Lot 12 Public House in Berkeley Springs, West Virginia, has advanced to the Best Chef semifinal round – the only chef from West Virginia to do so – of the southeast region for the past decade.

"It's really an honor to be nominated," Heath said. "It keeps me going; it's the pat on the back that no one else can give me. To be recognized by this organization, it's really great."

Nominations for The James Beard Awards rely on open submissions, which are then narrowed by a group of critics, writers and editors who produce the list of semifinalists. From there, the list is voted on by a group of former James Beard Award winners, committee members and regional panelists. The five semifinalists with the highest number of votes in each category become finalists. Awards are presented annually.

Heath, and his wife Betsy, who co-own the restaurant, credit their place in the community for much of the restaurant's success.

"It's a very tight-knit community here. Everyone is so supportive," Betsy said. "With Damian growing up here in Berkeley Springs, I think we had the support of the community when we first opened. It's heartwarming that our first night opening, we were completely full – because everyone knew him and was so excited for us to be opening."

Lot 12 Public House opened Aug. 12, 1999. Since then, it has been serving up fresh, seasonal dishes that capitalize on local ingredients with a Northern Italian influence – with garlic, olive oil, antipastos, risottos.

"Most of the things you'll see will have traditional French preparations; you'll see beurre blancs, you'll see a lot of the desserts have French sauces – Crème Anglaise, crème brûlées – mostly because of his training and chefs he's worked for before we opened our restaurant," Betsy said.

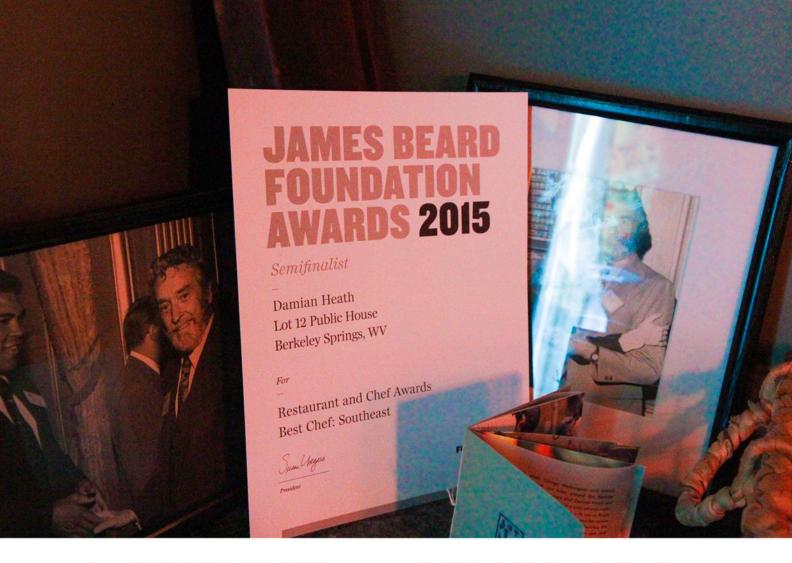
In the winter, the focus is on rich, hearty soups and stews, ragus, and bouillabaisses.

"I love doing brasises – doing them for a long time to develop that flavor. You can't get flavor like that from something else," Damian said.

Lot 12's current fall entrees include Coq Au Vin: braised chicken, creamy mashed potatoes, red wine broth with cremini mushrooms, shallots and applewood bacon. There's also the Tuscan Grilled Swordfish: white bean, fennel and limb crab ragu with a roasted garlic polenta cake. And don't forget the Veal Scaloppine with lump crab, shiitakes, marsala, butter and scallion mashed potatoes.







Summer dishes included Shrimp & Grits: Gulf shrimp, tasso, andouille and bell pepper cream sauce with creamy garlic cheese grits; Seared Scallops with corn, snow pea and edamame succotash with lump crab meat and creamy mashed potatoes; and Grilled Pork Tenderloin with warm potato bacon salad, peach barbeque sauce and pepper slaw.

Spring menus rely heavily on fresh fruits and vegetables available at local farmers markets. The mainstay on the menu – regardless of season – is the Crisp Roasted Duck, which is served with a rosemary potato cake, pear chutney and bourbon pan juices.

"We have tried changing a few items and had such negative feedback about taking items off the menu that we brought them back — one of which is the duck," Betsy said. "It's basically been on every menu since we opened, with the exception of one season. And we don't have a signature dish, but if I had to choose one, I would guess it would be the duck, because you don't see it on too many menus. And his menu is a traditional Peking style, which means it steams for a day and then it is roasted."

"A lot of times you may see a rare duck breast on the menu – this one can't be prepared like that. If you ever go to a Chinese restaurant and have to order a duck 24 hours in advance, this is why. He uses the same style of cooking, which allows it to get nice and crispy. That's unusual because duck can be quite fatty. It's crispy and served with bourbon-flavored pan juices and a pear and mango chutney – it's very

flavorful. It's a nice dish and a top-seller of the regular menu, definitely."

Farm-To-Table Frontier

Each seasonal menu utilizes ingredients from local farms, which Damian had formed a relationship with while growing up in Berkeley Springs.

"It's really interesting to see how things change over time, because when we first opened in 1999, there were about three food vendors, and most of them were the big houses that don't have very fresh ingredients," Betsy said. "And so we ended up working with local farms out of necessity because you couldn't get good product ... you would order it, and it would come in and already be past its prime."

Betsy said the restaurant cultivated a "farm-to-table" culture out of necessity. The couple began sourcing produce from local farms.

"Then, slowly, it became really trendy and really hot, and everyone is like 'oh, you're farm-to-table!' and yeah, we are, but we have been farm-to-table long before everyone was talking about it. And we did it because we didn't have a choice," Betsy laughed. "It's been pretty remarkable to see that transformation over time. I have no idea what changed – if it was the economy or what – but it's great to see more and more people supported local business. Because we are a local business, and we really hope that people support us. So we support

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other local businesses."

Betsy said there are a number of local farms the couple sources from for ingredients, including Greencastle Coffee Roasters, which roasts all coffees in their Victorian roasters that date from the late 1800s. They also work with Pipe Dreams Fromage, a goat farm in Greencastle, Pennsylvania.

"We go every week or every other week and play with the goats," Betsy said. "Sometimes he'll make special cheeses for Damian, like an ash-aged goat cheese or age it longer if we're having a special event coming up."

Mock's Greenhouses provides local vegetables, especially Bibb and Watercress lettuce, for the restaurant.

"He has a hydroponic farm, and I teach a class at a local community college in the culinary program where I take them to his farm. It's incredible to see these huge tunnels full of tomatoes, basil, cucumbers, lettuce. Until you step foot in there, you can't really tell the scope of how large it is. But it's really cool, and it's right here in Berkeley Springs," Betsy said.

Some ingredients for specials at the restaurant come right from the Heath's own backyard, as Betsy grows mostly tomatoes and peppers.

"I'll grow a patch of haricot verts French green beans, and he can run some sort of three-bean salad special for the weekend. Or I'll bring blue potatoes when I harvest them, and I'll have enough for a blue potato gratin for the weekend," Betsy said. "I can't supply the restaurant with a crop for the whole year, but I'll fill in. We do cantaloupe or watermelon, puree and freeze it for a sorbet intermezzo (between an appetizer and entrée for each guest). He will go through catalogs in January and pick out varieties of seeds he wants, and we'll use tomatoes as bases for a lot of things."

"I tend the gardens, raise chickens for the eggs we serve here, cut the herbs," Betsy said. "I volunteer a lot with the local schools and help them run their school garden program, too. When you grow something for yourself, it's incredible. I'm super proud of it, and I know how good it tastes — it's more flavorful. Like when you pick a green banana versus a ripe banana, they're like two different pieces of produce. They're not even the same thing. If you grow it yourself or get it from a local source, it doesn't get any better. And nutritionally, it's far more better for you to eat a locally grown piece of produce that hasn't traveled; it wasn't gassed in the back of an 18-wheeler on its way from California. I'm a huge advocate of the local farming community."

And, of course, Betsy said the Berkeley Springs Farmers Market proves invaluable for seasonal produce. Lot 12 also participates in the market by selling soups, and the couple's son, Jackson, bakes pepperoni rolls – known as pepperoni bombs due to their enormous size – to sell, as well.

"Damian is absolutely inspired by seasons; he's inspired by freshness. He will of course make hearty soups and stews in the winter because who doesn't want to eat a nice, rich hearty dish on a cold winter's night? He's about the satisfaction you get from eating a meal," Betsy said. "You don't want to necessarily eat a Tuscan bread salad with an Italian vinaigrette in December. You would rather have a beef

bourguignon with grilled quail. It just goes with the season. And so absolutely the whole menu revolves around what is in season – which sometimes is a week or two behind the actual calendar change because so is the growing season. Just because the calendar says it's fall doesn't mean Butternuts have had their first frost yet. And you don't pick your Butternuts until they've frosted, otherwise they're not sweet. So you have to wait until Mother Nature cooperates in order to change the menu."

While the menu revolves around fresh ingredients and seasonal availability, Damian also draws inspiration from other sources to inject into the menu as well – like from places he visits, magazines he browses or even TV shows he watches.

"I change focuses. It may be more French driven or Italian driven. I go on whimsy and what I feel like. My philosophy changes — as do the menus. Currently, I'm in more of a Southern mentality; we went to Florida last year and spent some time in South Carolina in January, and I brought back that southern goodness. Southern food is just so good, so I do some specials with it," Damian said.

He has created a buttermilk-fried quail and waffles as a spin on chicken and waffles, among other more Southern style dishes for the menu recently.

"It's trendy, but I'm not doing it because it's trendy. Shrimp and grits is one of the best dishes you can get – it's just one of those things," he said. "I cook the food I want to eat for the most part."

He often browses magazines or watches cooking shows to help spark an idea. One of his favorites includes watching Food Network's "Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives" and refining those ideas.

"I like to take those things and make them high class; I like where he goes. I like the little things they're doing and take them up a notch," he said. "That's fun."

His favorite dish he's ever created was a lobster done three ways, which included a salad, a tempura fried tail and medallions in a sauce where each was paired with a wine.

"My sous chef remembers it better than I do, but the wine dinner was fun. That was awesome. It was a really neat night," Damian said.

As for the couple's favorite restaurants to visit, only one comes to mind: The Press Room in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. The Press Room's current chef, Mike Luksa, previously worked at Yellow Brick Bank – where Betsy and Damian met while working under Luksa's direction.

Beginning of Betsy and Damian

Both Damian and Betsy were born in the Washington, D.C., area and their parents moved to the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia in the 70s. Damian grew up in Berkeley Springs, while Betsy grew up one county over.

Food was always in the mix, though, as elaborate Italian dinners full of raucous laughter and plate after plate of delicious food were the focal point of any family gathering in the Heath household, and new cuisines and restaurants were always sought out on trips. Damian



began cooking and waiting tables at restaurants in high school.

Damian, who comes from a family of award-winning artists who traveled up and down the East Coast doing shows, pursued philosophy and art history at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington after high school. After two years, he attended the Baltimore International Culinary College and trained in Europe under a master French chef.

When Damian returned from Europe, he worked at the Yellow Brick Bank restaurant in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, as a sous chef. Betsy was attending Shepherd College for biology – and sometimes art – while also working at the restaurant.

"I was going back and forth between biology; I couldn't really make up my mind. I loved both, but I eventually ended up with the science degree not the art degree," Betsy said. "I really had this desire to move south, so we moved to Charleston, South Carolina."

The duo headed south where they worked in a variety of restaurants, as well as catering. There, Damian's background of Italian comfort food combined with classical French preparation met Southern cuisine. And Betsy has used her background in art to help design menus, choose decorations, drapes and manage front-of-house needs.

In 1997, they were approached to open a restaurant in the Outer Banks of North Carolina. Damian and Betsy opened the restaurant in April 1998, but before then, an old house back in Damian's hometown came up for sale.

"Whenever we would come back to visit, we would look around and see that there were happening people around town. It is bustling. A fine dining restaurant could work here," Damian said. "Every time we'd come, it would be in the back of our heads. We would think this might be the place after all."

The Warren Street house had been in the back of the couple's minds and once their obligation to the restaurant in North Carolina was fulfilled, the two moved back to Berkeley Springs.

"We had planned to move up to the New England area and live up there for a little while, but Damian always had in his head that he wanted to come back to Berkeley Springs and open a restaurant. When this house came up for sale in January 1998, we knew. He was familiar with the building before we even came to look at it, so he was certain this was the house he wanted, and this is where he wanted to be," Betsy said.

Damian and Betsy married in November 1998, and Lot 12 Public House opened for business in August 1999.

Lot #12

Berkeley Springs, known for the rich mineral waters that run

through the town, was frequented by George Washington, who had a hand in the surveying that took place in the town. Because the springs were noted for curing various maladies, people would travel to the area to be healed.

The town, Bath (Berkeley Springs proper), was designated into 131 historic lots when it was originally founded. And Lot 12 Public House sits in the Lot #12.

"On the back of our menu, there's that little map and a black dot that shows where we are," Betsy said. "Nothing incredibly historic happened on this lot, but it was one of a few lots owned by the same man." The Lot 12 Public House menu reads:

"Fifty acres of the original Fairfax grant were conveyed by Thomas Lord Fairfax to establish the town. Remembering Britain's most elaborate spa, the predominantly English society named the town Bath. The Trustees were given the responsibility of governing and developing the town to rival Bath, England."

Lot #12 was conveyed by the Trustees of the Town of Bath to Capt. John Swann in 1777. Capt. John Swann of Washington County, Maryland, owned Lots #12, #13, #34, and #35 by 1798.

Lot 12 Public House is located in a house that was built in 1913 on Lot #12. The kitchen is a brand new addition that was constructed.

"There were some pretty major renovations — mostly cosmetic, with a little bit of structural. But lots of plumbing and electrical for sure. That all had to be replaced," Betsy said. "And, there was a two-bedroom apartment upstairs, and we actually lived upstairs for the first four years."

Cultivating Community

"The whole community has been really supportive of us," Betsy said.
"We've met a lot of great people."

Lot 12 Public House isn't often advertised locally or otherwise, beyond its website and some social media presence. But, there hasn't been much print advertising and very little group advertising.

and ask the front desk clerk or they ask the gas station attendant or they ask shop owners about restaurants available, and they often recommend us," Betsy said. "They are pleasantly surprised to find us."

But what keeps people coming back is a different story.

"We have an attention to detail and a really high expectation of ourselves to begin with and what we think we're capable of — which translates over to the staff," Betsy said. "We think that with every word our staff says and every word we say when we are putting a plate of food down in front of someone — that's our reputation. And we're really proud of it."

Chantel Oakley, manager at Lot 12 Public House, has worked at the restaurant for about 10 years. Oakley, a Berkeley Springs native and one of about a dozen employees at the restaurant, added, "What Damian does here is magical. He's very talented and super creative and passionate, and that's conveyed in every dish that comes out of this kitchen. It's just something you wouldn't expect in this town, and with Betsy – she makes this all work."

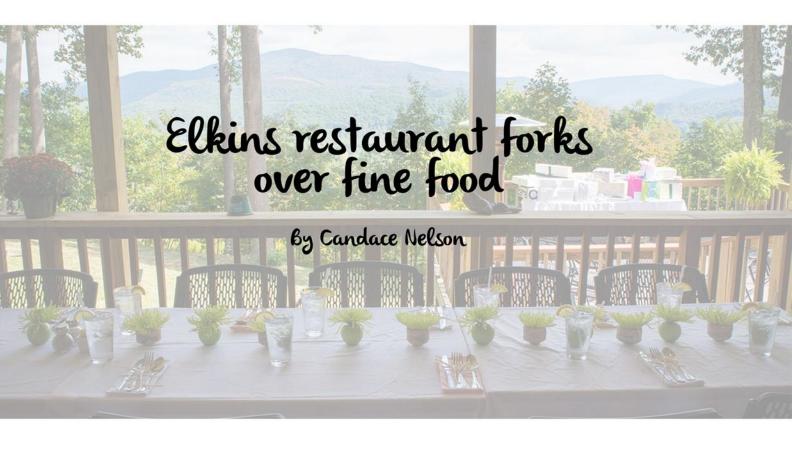
As for the future, Damian has some dishes in mind. One is a classical braised veal shoulder, which is braised for a long time, formed into a circle and pan-fried.

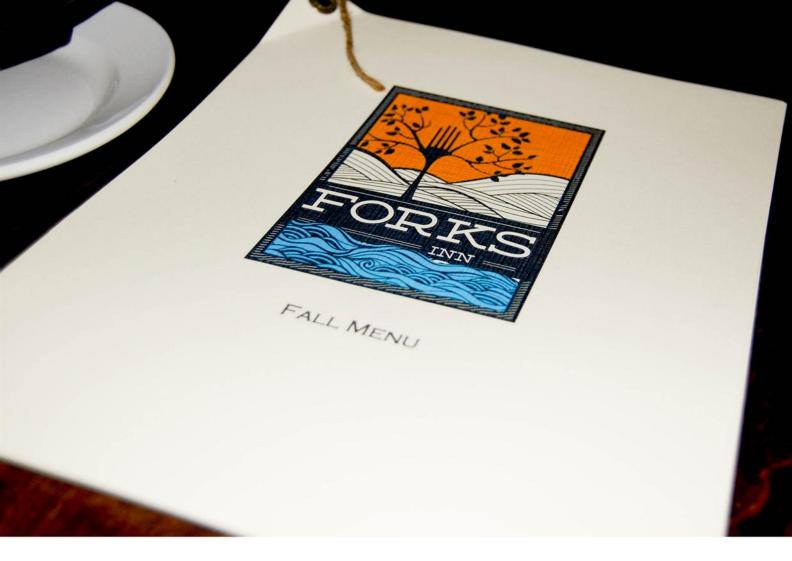
"It's labor intensive, but I think the end result would be fantastic. I know restaurants do it, and I applaud them for it. But I just don't have the time or wherewithal. That will be one I'll make as a special soon," Damian said. "Get a boneless shoulder, braise it, sear it, press two of them together with weights and cut medallions. Sear that off and serve with a sauce. I think it would be great."

Betsy said the couple is always thinking and planning for the future.

"We are continually intrigued with the whole movement toward craft distilling, which in West Virginia, it's tricky to have a retail license and a manufacturing license. But we're intrigued. That may be something we look at later down the road," she said.

Lot 12 is located at 177 Warren Street, Berkeley Springs, West Virginia 25411. 304-258-6264. It is open at 5 p.m. Thursday and Friday for dinner service and 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.





A

round the dinner table at every family get-together, Drew Stalnaker and his brother, Trevor, along with their uncle, Eric, would talk about opening a restaurant.

With the brothers' combined education in business and the restaurant industry paired with Eric's 30-plus years of culinary experience, the not-yet-created The Forks Restaurant and Inn was sure to be a hit.

"People joke that I took my first steps in the bar that my dad bartended in back in the day; our family, and extended family, has been in the restaurant business for years. The restaurant business has been ingrained in my family for a long time," Drew said.

When a local property in their hometown of Elkins became available, the two brothers kept their eyes on it. The Kelly Mountain Road location had seen a number of restaurants and business cycle through, and the men had even spent some time in the building during their childhood.

"We knew the building. We knew the previous businesses that had been in here. It's a unique spot. It really is a one-of-a-kind place with the view that we have here. We knew we could make it something special if we all came together," Drew said. "I like to consider Elkins a real central spot for the state of West Virginia. Elkins is a fork in the road for all the great places you want to go — we're just 30 minutes to an hour away from the most beautiful spots West Virginia has to offer.

There's no better place to gather people for a great meal."

The vacant property sat idle for five years as the price slowly declined. Once it hit that magic number, Drew and Trevor called Eric with the opportunity in 2012.

The Forks Restaurant and Inn, which gets its name in part from the various forks of the Cheat River, serves up local, fresh food with an emphasis on made-from-scratch items. Meats are smoked on premises, herbs are homegrown, some sauces take days to make, and everything from specialty mustards and jams to decadent desserts and pastas are crafted in house.

"We're passionate about the kind of food we serve here," Drew said. "Our menu items – and our name, the concept, everything – is a combination of not just the owners, but our whole family and based on the values and local community."

The menu changes seasonally, but house specials include Steak Au Poivre Vert: pan-seared flat iron steak finished with a brandy and green peppercorn sauce; Popcorn-Crusted Trout: fresh West Virginia trout fillets crusted with popcorn, sautéed golden brown and finished with lemon garlic butter; and a freshly made pasta in house.

"Our Steak Au Poivre Vert is phenomenal," said Trevor. "That brandy peppercorn sauce is just so far and above anything else we've tasted."





The dishes are the work of Eric Stalnaker, who has classical French training that he has injected into his dishes at Michel starred restaurants and five-star hotels around the world – including right at The Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia.

"The only reason we can afford him is because he's family," Trevor joked.

Eric's French influence is found through various sauces on the menu, as well as his signature cheesecake.

"Our cheesecake changes every three days with Eric's own recipe," Drew said. "We have people who come in, and try a piece of cheesecake, and they'll just buy a whole cheesecake. It's rare to see these handcrafted desserts because they take so much time and effort, but it's something we really take a lot of pride in," Drew said.

In addition to the restaurant, The Forks Restaurant and Inn has six rooms available for lodging, which are usually quickly filled up - by both tourists and locals who often enjoy the beautiful scenic views from the mountain.

"We have the restaurant on the ground floor with the large covered patio, and the inn rooms are located above the restaurant," Drew said. "We did all the work ourselves and completely remodeled everything. To be successful in this industry, you have to diversify – so the inn is how we can add something extra to what we offer here in the

restaurant."

Drew said that when the inn first opened, it leaned more heavily toward locals, but numbers have switched where now tourists make up a significant portion of those who spend time at the inn.

"We've had a good response with people coming in. Our rooms book up really quickly. All of our rooms for October were booked months prior. Winter time, it drops off a bit, but this view is great every season – the mountain and the view is one of the highest points in the state," Drew said.

The Elkins community has not only embraced Eric's locally famous steaks and cheesecakes, but also the entire restaurant and inn.

"We couldn't ask for a better response with the people from Elkins. We were active in the community our whole lives with sports and volunteering, things like that. So word traveled fast that we were going to open something. We are here every single night working — me, Trevor and Eric. We're not just owners; I'm bartending, waiting tables, washing dishes. We really do it all, and really take a lot of pride in doing that, too," Drew said. "And, honestly, I think that's why the local community has really jumped on board with us. They see that and appreciate that work ethic in this community."

The Forks Restaurant and Inn is open for dinner Tuesday through Thursday from $5 \, \mathrm{p.m.}$ to $9 \, \mathrm{p.m.}$, Friday and Saturday from $5 \, \mathrm{p.m.}$ to $10 \, \mathrm{p.m.}$ and Sunday from $5 \, \mathrm{p.m.}$ to $9 \, \mathrm{p.m.}$ For more information, visit http://attheforks.com.





espite the chance of a dreary evening, thousands filled the streets of Uptown Beckley on October 3 for the 25th annual Beckley Chili Night. "Considering the weather was unpredictable all week with forecasts uncertain on the route of a hurricane, we did well, and we were pleased with the attendance," Jill Moorefield, director of Beckley Events (formerly Beckley Renaissance), said.

Attendees were able to choose samples from over 40 chili vendors and browse and purchase items from 25 other booths. "We sold close to 3000 strips of tickets, which equaled 15,000 chili samples," Moorefield said. "We made about \$16,000 from ticket sales, sponsors, vendors and shirt sales, and after our expenses were paid, we cleared \$7,000," Proceeds from the event go towards funding other special projects in the community. Vendors also received 25 cents back from each ticket collected.

The next Beckley Chili Night will be held on Saturday, October 1, 2016. "We hope to continue to offer a great event," says Moorefield.

Beckley Chili Night: Judges' Perspective

Alan and Stephanie Kennedy, of West Virginia Sleep Centers, have attended Beckley Chili Night several times, but this year, they put their palates to the test as judges. "Judges were assigned to one category each and had to taste approximately 15 to 20 samples," Alan said. "We were asked to determine presentation, creativity of ingredients, smell, taste, and after-taste."

In terms of taste, Alan said his and Stephanie's preferences are pretty similar. "Neither of us like a lot of heat and prefer a thinner broth instead of a thicker grainy corn-flour (masa harina) base," he explained. "It is post-production where we go our separate ways. Stephanie likes to break cornbread up and mix it into her chili where I like to add cheese, diced fresh tomatoes and onions with cornbread on the side."

With so many entries, choosing a favorite had to be hard, but Alan confirmed that Alan and Stephanie Kennedy

there wasn't much debate. "Only a couple of samples didn't win over these judges, and that was primarily due to an excess amount of a particularly powerful seasoning - too much cinnamon and/or cumin for example," he said. "In our respective categories judged - we would say the judges were fairly unanimous in their decisions as each sample was being evaluated."





Looking back, the couple agreed it was an enjoyable experience. "We found it to be very enlightening from a taste-testing standpoint," Alan said. "We also gained new friends and acquaintances from the overall fellowship shared with other judges. We would be honored to judge again if asked."

Beckley Chili Night 2015 Winners

Categories:

Restaurant/Catering:

1st - Dickey's BBQ

2nd - Texas Steakhouse

3rd - The Market on Courthouse Square

Non-restaurant Business:

1st - Brown Dog Enterprise

2nd - MVP Management / Venus Lounge

3rd - Raleigh County Circuit Court

Organization:

1st - Perry Memorial Methodist Church

2nd - Jumping Branch Elementary School

3rd - Raleigh County Commission on Aging

People's Choice:

1st - Best Ambulance

2nd - Jan Care Ambulance

3rd - Beckley Fire Department with Eckley Orthodontics

Honorable Mention (highest % of coins in the 200 - 500 sample range) Beckley Presbyterian Church

Best Spicy:

1st - Jackie Withrow Hospital

and - Fosters'

3rd - Raleigh County Firefighters Association

Best Specialty (Most Unique/Creative):

1st - Beckley Fire Department

2nd - Bunkers / Glade Springs

3rd - Hospice

Most Exciting Booth:

1st - Raleigh County Firefighters Association

2nd - Club 3-D

Most Attractive Booth: 1st - Best Ambulance



COOKING WITH FRUIT

PORK CHOPS SMOTHERED WITH SAUTÉED APPLES, ONIONS, AND APPLE CIDER GRAVY



CHICKEN WITH CHERRY SAUCE



PORK CHOPS WITH POMEGRANATE GLAZE







PORK CHOPS SMOTHERED WITH SAUTÉED APPLES, ONIONS, AND APPLE CIDER GRAVY

4 BONELESS PORK CHOPS SALT AND PEPPER, TO TASTE

2 TBSP. OLIVE OIL

1 LARGE YELLOW-SKINNED ONION, SLICED

3 GALA APPLES, CORED AND SLICED

1/2 TBSP. DRIED THYME

2 TBSP. BUTTER

2 TBSP. FLOUR

1 C. APPLE CIDER

1 C. CHICKEN STOCK

SEASON THE PORK CHOPS ON BOTH SIDES WITH SALT AND PEPPER. HEAT 1 TBSP. OLIVE OIL IN A LARGE SKILLET OVER MEDIUM HEAT AND SAUTÉ THE PORK CHOPS, TURNING ONCE, UNTIL DONE. REMOVE THE PORK CHOPS FROM THE SKILLET AND COVER WITH ALUMINUM FOIL

ADD THE REMAINING 1 TBSP. OLIVE OIL TO THE SAME SKILLET USED TO COOK THE PORK CHOPS. SAUTÉ THE ONION AND APPLES IN THE OLIVE OIL, SEASONING WITH SALT, PEPPER, AND THYME, UNTIL TENDER. REMOVE THE ONION AND APPLES TO THE PLATTER CONTAINING THE PORK CHOPS.

ADD 2 TBSP. TO THE PAN USED TO SAUTÉ THE PORK CHOPS, ONION, AND APPLES. WHEN THE BUTTER MELTS, WHISK IN 2 TBSP. FLOUR AND COOK FOR APPROXIMATELY ONE MINUTE. WHISK IN 1 C. APPLE CIDER AND 1 C. CHICKEN STOCK. SIMMER UNTIL THICKENED.

TO SERVE: PLACE THE PORK CHOPS ON A SERVING PLATTER. TOP WITH THE SAUTÉED ONION AND APPLES. SMOTHER WITH APPLE CIDER GRAVY.



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CHICKEN WITH CHERRY SAUCE

4 TBSP. OLIVE OIL

3 BONELESS, SKINLESS CHICKEN BREASTS

1/2 TBSP. DRIED THYME

SALT AND PEPPER, TO TASTE

2 C. CHICKEN STOCK

3 TBSP. BUTTER

1 MEDIUM YELLOW-SKINNED ONION, CHOPPED

1/2 TSP. CRUSHED RED PEPPER FLAKES

1/4 TSP. NUTMEG

1 C. DRIED CHERRIES

SEASON THE CHICKEN BREASTS ON BOTH SIDES WITH SALT, PEPPER, AND THYME. HEAT 3 TBSP. OLIVE OIL IN A LARGE SKILLET OVER MEDIUM HEAT AND SAUTÉ THE CHICKEN BREASTS, TURNING ONCE, UNTIL DONE. REMOVE THE CHICKEN BREASTS FROM THE SKILLET AND COVER WITH ALUMINUM FOIL.

ADD THE REMAINING 1 TBSP. OLIVE OIL TO THE SAME SKILLET. ADD THE ONION, CRUSHED RED PEPPER FLAKES, NUTMEG, SALT, AND PEPPER AND SAUTÉ UNTIL THE ONIONS ARE TENDER. ADD 2 C. CHICKEN STOCK AND 1 C. DRIED CHERRIES AND SIMMER UNTIL THE LIQUID HAS REDUCED BY HALF. ADD 3 TBSP. BUTTER AND STIR UNTIL BUTTER HAS COMPLETELY MELTED.

TO SERVE: PLACE THE CHICKEN ON A SERVING PLATTER. POUR CHERRY SAUCE OVER CHICKEN.

#TASTEWV

SUBMIT YOUR FAMILY FEATURE YOUR OR YOUR FAMILY'S RECIPE IN AN UPCOMING ISSUE OF



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PORK CHOPS WITH POMEGRANATE GLAZE

4 BONELESS PORK CHOPS 1 C. POMEGRANATE JUICE 1/2 C. POMEGRANATE SEEDS 1/2 TBSP. DRIED ROSEMARY 2 TBSP. BUTTER SALT AND PEPPER, TO TASTE

PREHEAT THE OVEN TO 400 F. SEASON THE PORK CHOPS WITH ROSEMARY, SALT, AND PEPPER. ROAST THE PORK CHOPS UNTIL DONE, APPROXIMATELY 30 MINUTES. BOIL THE POMEGRANATE JUICE UNTIL THICKENED, APPROXIMATELY 5 MINUTES. STIR IN 2 TBSP. BUTTER AND 1/2 CUP POMEGRANATE SEEDS.

TO SERVE: PLACE PORK CHOPS ON PLATTER, TOP WITH GLAZE.

PEARS POACHED IN RED WINE

4 BOSC PEARS ONE BOTTLE OF GOOD-QUALITY RED WINE

HALVE THE PEARS AND REMOVE THE CORE WITH A SPOON. POUR THE BOTTLE OF WINE INTO A LARGE STOCK POT. ADD THE PEARS AND SIMMER UNTIL TENDER, APPROXIMATELY 30 MINUTES.



FOODIE EVENTS

DECEMBER

Culinary Crawl / Morgantown Restaurant Week (Morgantown): December 5 – 12 Sample special menus at reduced prices from participating

restaurants on High, Chestnut and Pleasant Streets and the Wharf District during this inaugural event. www.morgantowneats.com

Blennerhassett Hotel's 3rd Annual Gingerbread Contest (Parkersburg): December 7 - 28

Browse edible art creations constructed by individuals of all ages and skill levels during this special holiday display. www.theblennerhassett.com/events/3rd-annual-gingerbread-

Feast of the Seven Fishes (Fairmont): December 12 This traditional Italian celebration features customary seafood dishes, holiday music and an open-air street market. www.sevenfishesblog.com

Cockayne Christmas and Cookies (Glen Dale): December 12 – 14 Enjoy Christmas decorations and treats from 1860, 1890, and 1925 and tours during the Cockayne Farmstead's Christmas celebration. www.cockaynefarm.com

Snowshoe Winter Brewfest (Snowshoe): December 19 Sample over 50 beers ranging from local favorites to nationally recognized award winners while enjoying music from Fletchers Grove on the mountain. www.snowshoemtn.com

Christmas Eve Gingerbread Ball (White Sulphur Springs): December 24 The Greenbrier Resort hosts a family-friendly Christmas Eve buffet full of seasonal surprises, including special appearances by Santa and Mrs. Clause, The Nutcracker ballerinas and live music by The Sugar Plum Quartet. www.greenbrier.com

NYE at WV State Parks: December 31

Celebrate the new year with dinner, dances and champagne toasts at Tygart Lake, Cacapon Resort, Pipestem, Chief Logan, Twin Falls, North Bend and Blackwater Falls State Parks. www.wvstateparks.com/calendar.html

JANUARY

Festival of Food and Wine (Morgantown): January 15 – 17 The 32nd annual Festival of Food and Wine will include seminars focusing on cuisines in L.A., NOLA, NYC and others as well wine tastings, whiskey samplings, an artisan marketplace and the 6th annual Iron Chef Competition.

www.lakeviewresort.com/morgantown-events

Charleston Restaurant Week

(Charleston): January 25 – 30
Several eateries offer a three course pre-fixe menu over a five-day period in this annual observance of local business. www.cwvrestaurantweek.com

FEBRUARY

Cast Iron Cook-off / West Virginia Winter Food Festival (Charleston): February 5 & 6

This annual "culinary extravaganza", now in its 11th year, highlights New Appalachian cuisine as well as the use of indigenous ingredients and traditional cookware in a competition setting. www.castironcookoff.org

Valentine's Day in WV State Parks: February 13 Cass, North Bend, Chief Logan

Have a night out with your sweetheart this Valentine's day at one of the state parks, many of which are holding themed dinners and dances for the romantic occasion, www.wvstateparks.com/calendar.html

International Water Tasting (Berkeley Springs): February 25 - 28 A panel of judges evaluate municipal, purified and bottled (still and sparkling) during the world's largest and longest-running water tasting competition. www.berkeleysprings.com/water

FeastivALL (Charleston): February 27

Guests vote for their favorite beverage pairing – craft beer or wine - for each of five courses during this yearly FestivALL benefit. www.festivallcharleston.com/content/feastivall-2015

For more events, like Taste WV Magazine on Facebook https://www.facebook.com/TasteWV or visit the West Virginia Division of Tourism at http://gotowv.com/events/calendar.



















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