



Dining

80 years later, menu at Fisherman's Inn still creative

By **TERRA WALTERS**
Correspondent

In times like these, when drastic changes are evident everywhere you look, it's comforting to see the model train still wending its way along the tracks high above the attractive dining room at Fisherman's Inn.

Generations of diners (the restaurant opened more than 80 years ago) have watched that little train go around while enjoying the consistently excellent fare.

Long-time chef Paul Wernsdorfer is a prime example of someone who has years of experience as opposed to having one year's experience repeated year after year for decades. He's still keeping it creative and imaginative, as evidenced by a couple of recent additions to the menu.

One of those was the first thing to catch our attention, Fried Green Tomato and Crab Stack (\$14). A lot of times, when a menu item has several ingredients other than crab, the tendency is for the kitchen to stint on the crabmeat. Not the case with this inspired dish. There was an abundance of jumbo lump crab along with a thick

WHEN YOU GO

WHAT: Fisherman's Inn.
WHERE: 3116 Main St., Grasonville.
PHONE: 410-827-8807.
WEBSITE: www.fishermansinn.com.
HOURS: 11 a.m.-10 p.m. daily.
EXECUTIVE CHEF: Paul Wernsdorfer.
FIRST COURSES: \$5 to \$14.
MAIN COURSES: \$18 to \$37.
RESERVATIONS: Not accepted, but you may call ahead for priority seating for 10 or more.
CREDIT CARDS: All major cards accepted.
ACCESSIBILITY: Yes.

slice of fried green tomato and a swoon-worthy sauce.

The sauce, rich and delicious, was comprised of sweet corn, bits of country ham, butter, and cream. Just the right amount of sherry provided an accent. As a matter of fact, the sauce was so good that we didn't mind that it prevented the batter on the tomato from remaining crisp. My dining companion and I commented that it had been quite a while since we tasted

a dish that delicious.

Another new item from the appetizer list also found favor. Lobster Tempura (\$13) added a note of Asian flavor with tempura-battered lobster tails served with pickled ginger and a seaweed salad. Presentation was beautiful, with the lobster tails served atop a white plate that had been drizzled with a criss-cross pattern of wasabi cream sauce and soy ponzu sauce. Also a noteworthy addition to the menu.

As we were at Fisherman's Inn for lunch, we eschewed wine because we both had afternoon commitments. Had we selected a white, however, we would have gone with the 2012 Frenzy Sauvignon Blanc (\$31) from New Zealand.

Though considered primarily a seafood restaurant, Fisherman's Inn offers several dishes (including prime rib) that feature Certified Angus Beef. Consequently, had we visited that section of the menu, we would have chosen the 2012 Caymus Meomi Pinot Noir (\$38), which would have paired nicely with the beef.

Considering that there are usually three of us who visit Fisherman's Inn,

we didn't hesitate to order several items in order to have ample leftovers to assuage the disappointment of the one who couldn't come. That was our rationale (it was our story and we were sticking to it) for getting an order of the remarkable Fisherman's Inn Onion Rings (\$8).

Unlike the pre-made onion rings that arrive at most restaurants on the back of a truck, these are made in house — hand-cut and hand-breaded. A giant basket of tastiness. Our delightful server, Alicia, was happy to package the leftovers (so much better than having someone come to your table and slap down a plastic foam box), even putting them in bags for us so they'd be easy to carry.

One member of our party opted for the Imperial Rockfish (\$19) that was flawless. Mouth-watering fresh rockfish, seared to perfection, was topped with an exceptional version of crab imperial. As for the accompaniment (you could choose your own side dish), the menu might have called them green beans, but they certainly deserved the haricots verts sobriquet. Whole baby green

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DINING

FISHERMAN'S

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beans had been steamed for just the right amount of time, leaving them bright green and with just a bit of crunch. Perfect.

The other diner chose the Shrimp Quesadilla (\$12) and again was pleased with both attractive presentation and optimal preparation. Served with homemade salsa, sour cream and fries (Alicia was happy to substitute the green beans for the fries), the quesadilla featured gulf shrimp, green onions, mild chiles, fresh cilantro and two kinds of cheese stuffed into

a flour tortilla and cut into wedges. Quite a hearty portion, and certainly better than most renderings of this dish.

We weren't up for dessert on this visit, but ordinarily we'd go for their Coconut Cream Pie (\$6). It's my sister's favorite version of her favorite dessert. They also make their own ice cream at Fisherman's Inn, so check to see what tempting flavors they have when you go.

Fisherman's Inn is certainly the place to go for happy hour if you find yourself on the Eastern Shore. They have a wide selection of wines (including several half-bottles, not easy to find on restaurant wine lists), beers (with several micro-brews), and interesting

cocktails (be sure to try the Ravens Rita). The only thing better than having a lot of choices? Having an attractive price point for them. Their happy hour also features more than a dozen tasty appetizers with prices from \$5 to \$7.

No wonder Fisherman's Inn has been in business for going on a century, as they are all about making diners happy. Happy hour is just one example of that. They also provide a casual but elegant ambiance (roaring fire in the fireplace during winter) in a lovely dining room that looks out over a garden with a waterfall and a pond. (Beyond that, a view of boats and the water.)

Fisherman's Inn further demonstrates a desire to please their patrons by providing for dietary preferences and requirements. Not only do they denote menu items that are gluten-free, they provide a separate gluten-free menu as well. The kitchen is happy to accommodate any food allergies and to modify any menu items that they can. Vegetarians as well as vegans will enjoy the Farmers Spaghetti Medley (\$18).

If winter has left you feeling as though you've been down nine miles of bad road, treat yourself to a little mini-vacation. Play hooky from work and head over to the Eastern Shore. A trip to the

Fisherman's Inn will have you feeling better in no time.

Directions: Take Route 50 across the Bay Bridge to Exit 42. At the end of the exit, turn right at the stop sign and continue 1/8 of a mile. The restaurant is on the left, across from the Comfort Inn.

OF NOTE: Trying to have your cake and eat it too?

Well, maybe an unfortunate choice of phrase.

Trying to lose weight and still be able to eat out at our terrific local restaurants?

Here are some ideas that might help you out: Put down your fork between bites; ask for double veggies instead of the traditional veggie and starch; get sauces and salad dressings on the side and then use sparingly; and best of all? Divide your main course in half and box that portion to take home.

ALSO OF NOTE: If you find yourself in Alexandria (or if you can make up a reason why you should head to Northern Virginia), be sure to try Osteria Marzano. A recent dinner with friends found us sampling one tasty dish after the other.

Best bet? Veal Marsala. Really outstanding.

A FINAL NOTE: Annapolis, Baltimore and Washington, D.C., all have one — and now west county will be added to the list of places that hold a Restaurant Week, which will be held from March 3-9.

Participating restaurants will create special menus consisting of two or three courses. Diners will pay \$14.14 for a two-course lunch or \$24.14 for a three-course dinner (the price does not include gratuity or taxes).

So far, eight restaurants have signed up, but the West County Chamber, which is sponsoring the inaugural event, expects more to join in the next week.

For more information, visit www.westcountychamber.org or call 410-672-3422.

Terra Walters is a freelance writer and editor based in Annapolis.



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