

EIGHTY ACRES

By
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Kitchen & Bar

Contemporary. Fresh. Local.

For a restaurant that's only been on the scene since March of 2014, they've already garnered a lot of attention from the local media --- all of it positive.



What restaurant do you choose when you want delectable, contemporary cuisine that sources fresh and local ingredients? Surely you would head into the heart of the city, right? Not so fast.

Eighty Acres Kitchen and Bar in Plum offers a unique restaurant experience--- it's a restaurant with an urban vibe that happens to be located in a suburb. But you would never know it from the rustic, inviting décor and the rotating eclectic menu.

For Don Winkie, the former head chef at the Tuscan Inn on Wildwood Road in Allison Park, and his wife, Amy Schlonski, owning their own restaurant was a dream that has long been in the making.

"Doing our own thing was in the back of our minds, but all the forces of life worked on us, and it was hard to get started," said Schlonski, who is a social worker by day.

But finally the time was right. The couple desired a restaurant with a fresh and original modern concept. While Pittsburgh has many options for good food, the couple knew that there was a dearth of upscale independent restaurants in the eastern suburbs where they resided.

"It was very do-it-yourself," said Schlonski, adding that the whole family worked on the building, the former Vincent's Pizza Park, to transform it into an urban farmhouse look, with its whitewashed pine and milk painted barn doors.

Inside, the restaurant can accommodate 86, with another 18 at the bar, as well as a private dining space that seats about 30; 30 is also the number of patrons that can be seated on the outdoor patio, weather permitting.

Schlonski describes the restaurant as a marriage of both homey and upscale. "A lot of people are pleasantly surprised about the atmosphere. It's fresh and it's casual, but we wanted to make it comfortable to come as you are---if you just got off your bike, come on in, or if you're dressed up for the evening, come on in!" she says.

An army brat that traveled overseas with his family, Winkie was exposed to international cuisine at an early age, prompting a love of food and cooking.

In the early part of his career, he was recruited by famed chef, John Trejo, Wolfgang Puck's right hand man to work and train at The Coyote Café at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas. The Coyote Café was owned by celebrity chef Mark Miller - it is a long enduring Santa Fe restaurant. Schlonski is originally from Pittsburgh, but the couple met in New Mexico, where she was a student; they decided to return to the area to raise their family.

Though Eighty Acres does not sit on eighty acres, the name was inspired by Winkie's parents' goat farm in Missouri. After Winkie's father retired, he bought an eighty-acre farm, a fulfillment of a dream.

they change it up about 5-6 times per year. "Gone are the days of restaurants that have four page menus," he said. Some sample dinner items include Braised Wild Boar, which had been a staple at Tuscan Inn; Gerber Amish Chicken Breast; Duck Breast; Pappardelle Bolognese; and Jamison Lamb, sourced from the farm of the same name in Latrobe.

Lunch is a mouthwatering selection of salads, entrees, sandwiches and snacks, such as roasted beet salad, crab cakes or jerk shrimp tacos.

The side dishes are equally drool-worthy, such as the Grass Fed Ribeye Steak, accompanied by Gruyere whipped potatoes,



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—Don Winkie

"It's the place where family gathers," said Schlonski. "He's since passed away, but the farm is still a significant part of the family identity. It was his resilience and his dream that inspired the name," she said. The chance they took is paying off.

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Now, their customers are not only east suburbanites but people from all over the city who make the trek out to Plum to enjoy fresh and original dishes.

They intentionally keep the menu limited because they cook fresh every day, and

roasted Brussels sprouts and herbed compound butter. Or, for Sunday Brunch, how about the shirred Eggs---2 eggs baked in creamed spinach, Yukon potatoes and aged cheddar---perhaps with a little bacon jam, pear & arugula crostini on the side? An extensive wine list and cocktails menu rounds out the offerings.

They also accommodate their vegetarian customers and those on gluten-free diets.

The couple's vision for the future of the restaurant is to continue to grow and to regularly update the menu. "We want to stay current with the restaurant trends, try to keep things fresh; basically, to continue on the road that we are on. In a restaurant, you have to keep changing and evolving what you're doing," said Winkie.