

New Restaurant REVIEW



by Jackie Cassada

Tired of the same old downtown lunches? Do you long for quality food on a limited budget? Where do you go when you have a craving for nachos--and fish and chips (and vinegar)?

The Annex, a newly opened restaurant at 22 Battery Park Avenue in downtown Asheville may be just the place you've been waiting for.

Open Monday through Saturday for lunch and dinner, The Annex features an international cuisine, generous portions, and reasonable prices.

Besides the afore-mentioned nachos and English-style fish and chips, the international gourmet can dine on a daily quish, follow an egg roll appetizer with spaghetti (from the genuine Spano family recipe) or opt for more traditional fare--such as the chicken-salad-with-almonds sandwich or egg-and-black-olive salad. Vegetarians can choose eggplant parmesan, a vegetable saute, a "veggie" sandwich (Monterey Jack cheese, black olives, cream cheese, alfalfa sprouts, lettuce and tomato) and, frequently, vegetarian quiche. And yes, they also serve hamburgers and B.L.T.'s.

The dinner menu offers a variety of beef, chicken, seafood and vegetarian delights. The surf 'n' turf crowd can choose from steak and crab or Steak Oscar (steak topped with Alaskan crab, asparagus spears and bearnaise sauce). There is also Chicken Oscar for the fish 'n' fowl minded.

The most curious item on the menu--and one well worth investigating--is an appetizer called

The Annex

"fried cheese." It can easily become addicting.

All this is affordable, too. Top price on the luncheon menu is \$3.25; most items are under \$3.00. Heading the dinner menu is a New York Strip Steak at \$8.95; most other items are under \$6.50 and some are less than \$5.00.

Served attractively in an atmosphere that is tasteful without being intimidating, the food is just one--though certainly the major--drawing card at The Annex. An underlying motif is the strong local commitment by Tom Patterson, the restaurant's owner. Wherever possible, local distributors were contracted for supplies. The photographs and paintings which decorate the walls display the talents of local artists.

"Downtown Asheville," says Patterson, "used to be, and could be again, a good place for people to work, eat and enjoy themselves. I see The Annex as another step toward the reality of a truly vital downtown.



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