



DINING OUT

By Bea and Ben Sorrencified

Here on the Crystal Coast, when we want to eat out, we are lucky to have so many choices, with many good ones among them. We can eat fancy, and we can eat plain. At times, we want to eat at restaurants that serve good “familiar” dishes, whether plain or fancy—you know, the kinds of things that we have eaten in restaurants for years, prepared in traditional ways. At other times, we seek out restaurants that serve the new and innovative, dishes with recipes that often have Asian, Caribbean or European roots, or even a mixture of ethnic origins. These dishes can bring us out of our culinary comfort zones—sometimes deliciously way out.

Somewhere between these two categories are the local restaurants that take familiar foods and prepare them with a wonderful “twist” unknown in traditional kitchens. One of the best among these restaurants is Floyd’s 1921 in Morehead City.

Floyd’s looks like a traditional restaurant. It is located in what once was a large private house, a white building with black shutters, which probably has changed little in appearance over the years. (The previous resident of the building, which looked much the same, was another restaurant called Nicola’s.) But even though Floyd’s looks traditional on the outside (and even on the inside), these looks are deceiving. Floyd’s prepares traditional foods with a marvelous “twist.”

The Floyd’s “twist” on the familiar is immediately clear when you read the menu, whether for lunch or for dinner. The lunch menu, for example, includes traditional local seafood items like oysters, scallops and shrimp. And, of course, you can have them fried. Better yet, you can have them prepared with a delectably different touch. Innovative oyster dishes include “Buffalo Oysters,” which are fried all right, but then served over blue cheese grits and “draped” with spicy buffalo sauce. Or take a culinary trip to New Orleans for fried oyster and sausage gumbo. Or try something slight-

ly tropical in the fried oyster and mango spinach salad.

Shrimp too can be eaten traditionally fried. But you can have a “Shrimp Napoleon,” layered with mozzarella cheese between fried grit cakes and topped with Tasso ham and roasted red pepper cream sauce (as they say, “to die for”). Or if you prefer, you can have grilled shrimp accompanied by fried green tomatoes layered with mozzarella cheese and spring greens drizzled with basil oil (mouth-watering, isn’t it?). Or if you have a taste for something lighter, you can order a blackened shrimp salad, with the shrimp served over baby greens and joined by blue cheese, red onions, and oranges in balsamic vinaigrette dressing.

Those who think crab cakes are the ultimate in seafood should definitely try the “High Cotton Crab Cakes,” which are served over creamed spinach (doubtless the way Popeye would enjoy them). All of these “twist” dishes promise to please the palate. And we found the promise very well met when we had lunch there recently.

The lunch menu at Floyd’s also includes sandwiches, both hot and cold. Once again, several of these sandwich options are “traditional” but prepared with a wonderful “twist.” For instance, among the cold sandwiches you will find the familiar BLT. Here, however, the sandwich is a Crab BLT—mmm! Turkey is served inventively wrapped in a honey-wheat tortilla with roasted red pepper, feta cheese, lettuce and Vidalia onion. And the ham sandwich is kicked up a notch as the “Nutty Pig,” composed of romaine lettuce and garden vegetables topped with ham, cheddar cheese and pecan brown sugar bacon. The hot sandwiches are equally well “twisted.” The Cuban sandwich brings together oven-roasted pork, ham, swiss cheese, grilled pineapple and champagne mustard. A combination of andouille sausage, peppers and onions is topped with mozzarella cheese and champagne mustard on ciabatta bread. And ham meets brie cheese in a hot offering that includes lettuce, tomato and sweet Vidalia onion dressing also on ciabatta bread.

What is not to like among these menu choices. No doubt, you will have to return to Floyd’s more than once to satisfy all your wants on the large and diverse—and suitably “twisted”—lunch menu.

But wait, as they say on TV, that’s not all. Floyd’s dinner menu is equally

inventive. In fact, some of the entree items on the lunch menu are also available at dinner (including, thankfully, “Shrimp Napoleon” and “Fried Green Tomato Stack,” among other dishes.) Especially interesting in addition are such entrees as shrimp and crab provençal, prepared in a tomato, basil, garlic and white wine sauce and placed over linguini or the andouille sausage-encrusted catfish (North Carolina catfish.), served over shrimp creole with steamed rice, collard greens and skillet corn bread. (How’s that for a “twist” on the traditional!) Another entrée is chicken and artichokes sautéed with onions, roasted red peppers and spinach in garlic white wine sauce and tossed with feta cheese and linguini (very good).

Sometime or all-time vegetarians will be drawn to fried almond-encrusted brie cheese, presented with peach jalapeno chutney over baby greens and accompanied by grilled French bread. And those who like old favorites without much “twist,” will find traditionally prepared ribs, steak, fish, and seafood on the menu—not to mention the meatloaf and the calves’ liver and onions. As you might imagine, reading the menu at Floyd’s is as much a treat for the eyes

as the delicious food options are for the palate.

Of course, good food should be paired with good drink. Floyd’s offers a fine selection of red and white wines drawn from California (especially), South America, Australia and Europe. Its beer selection is noticeably good, with interesting domestic and international choices, including a half-dozen North Carolina brews. For those who like more substance to their alcohol, the restaurant offers a long list of specialty martinis and several single-malt scotches, twelve to fifteen years in the enhancing.

And lest we forget, Floyd’s has a compelling selection of homemade desserts. You may want to ask to see samples before you order a full meal, in the not unlikely event that you will “have to have” or at the very least “have to share” one of them. Planning ahead for dessert is a wise approach at Floyd’s.

Floyd’s 1921 is located at the corner of 4th and Bridges Streets in Morehead City. The restaurant is open Tuesday through Sunday from 11:30 a.m. until 9 p.m. For reservations, call 727-1921. Menus are available at www.floyd’s1921.com.

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