

TOUCHED BY A GODDESS

Pomona's Woodfired Bakery Café

i

If Roman goddesses could transcend time and space, then the goddess Pomona surely has taken up residence in Adams County, where she is watching over the little café in Biglerville that bears her name.

When Marc Jalbert opened Pomona's Woodfired Bakery Café last year, he had been producing artisan bread for the Gettysburg community since 1996, concentrating on the wholesale market. His Gettysburg Baking Co. was growing and the self-taught baker had to look for a larger location. He found it at 213 E. York St. in Biglerville, the site of a tractor garage. The front of the building had operated earlier as Weaver's Bake Shop. He overhauled the building and had Arentsville stonemason Randy Bollinger build him a woodburning oven, perfect for his bread.

Jalbert decided to tap into the retail trade, bringing his baguettes and boules to local tables. Included in his plan was a small café, where he would serve light, simple fare and pizzas. "I thought I would sell foods that go with bread," he says. A few months into the venture, a young culinary school graduate walked in. Over cups of Pomona's house blend coffee, the two talked. Shaun Wolf was looking for a niche in the food business, something a little different and a cut above the rest. Jalbert's woodburning oven was the key. As a student working in a variety of restaurants, Wolf picked up training and experience cooking in a woodburning oven. But he could prepare whole meals, not just pizza.



Shaun Wolf, Marc Jalbert and Amanda Eberly





Watercress soup

BY BARBARA D'ARIENZO
PHOTOGRAPHY BY TARA HOPE



The challenge to give his customers something out of the ordinary was too good for Jalbert to pass up. For Wolf, the opportunity was the start of a dream come true.

"I had an interest in cooking as a career when I was younger, but didn't want to do what most places were doing. Then in East Berlin, where I grew up, the Restaurant Sidney opened. I knew that was the kind of cooking I wanted to do," he says.

Wolf is a graduate of the Restaurant School at Walnut Hill College in Philadelphia. "Working at Pomona's is giving me the opportunity to fast track to the food I wanted to do," he says. "So far, we're still searching for an identity. This is not fine dining, but we do serve good food."

A combination of factors make Wolf's claim true. First, there is the oven. It was built from Jalbert's concept by Bollinger,

whom the baker describes as a master. It is made from the bricks of a 19th century Hanover schoolhouse. Every working day, it is fired up and fed apple and oak wood, taking two hours to come to temperature. When it reaches approximately 600 degrees, it's ready for pizza. It takes 4 minutes for a 10-inch Margherita pizza. The superior crust is thin and a little chewy, but tender at the same time.

Wolf's dedication to using only fresh, locally-grown produce adds to the combination. "We personally know who is growing our products," he says. Only what is fresh, in season and locally grown is served.

Talent also plays a role. Jalbert, who used to run a graphic design business, is a hands-on boss. While Jalbert focuses on bread and Wolf cooks, Amanda Eberly is the pastry chef. A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, Eberly appreciates

Jalbert's mentoring ability. "I am free to experiment with ideas and be creative. I am enthusiastic about coming to work, who I work with and what I do," she says.

Eberly makes a variety of pastries daily, including apple turnovers, pecan sticky buns and rustic apple seasonal tarts. Her desserts end meals at Pomona's with a flourish.

The ricotta pound cake is light and tasty, draped with lovely lemon curd and topped with a refreshing sorbet. The sorbet's sweet flavor will make you wonder if it really is tomato.

The vanilla bean semifreddo is creamy and cool, contrasted with crunchy almonds beautifully richened with blueberry compote.

While Wolf shies away from describing his food as fine dining, it certainly is creative, trendy and unusual. You can start your meal with charcuterie made

(opposite page) The woodburning oven, made from the bricks of a 19th century schoolhouse, cooks a Margherita pizza in 4 minutes. (left) Jalbert has been producing artisan bread for Gettysburg since 1996. (right) The Norwegian salmon crudo features finely sliced rhubarb, red onion and apple.





(left) Wood-roasted morels and asparagus grace creamy polenta. (right) Well-seasoned Berkshire porchetta is a succulent dish.

in-house or a cheese plate of homemade and imported cheeses. Wolf says one day he might turn in his chef's hat to devote himself to producing cured meats and cheeses.

Salads and starters include watercress soup, cool and creamy with a labneh base. The strained yogurt is thick and not tangy. The peppery watercress is complemented with radish, cucumber and cured lemon. Scoop it up with Pomona's flatbread for a tasty treat.


The Norwegian salmon crudo is served with finely sliced rhubarb, red onion and apple mixed with fresh dill and cilantro. At Pomona's, apples turn up in a variety of ways in a salute to the restaurant's namesake. Jalbert says Pomona would ripen apples with her touch, bringing them to the point of perfection, not unlike what he would want in all he offers.

Berkshire porchetta is a succulent and delectable dish that comes to your table looking like a slice of round roast nestled alongside creamed spinach. The meat is well seasoned, and roasted chick peas and raisins round out the melodious

flavors and textures. Soft shell crabs are skewered and grilled. Tender and tasty, the crab is accompanied by a celery and apple sauté highlighted with grain mustard and cilantro. A polenta dish, rich and creamy with ricotta cheese, is crowned with wood-roasted morels and asparagus among annis hissup blooms. This vegetarian delight marries the full flavor of the polenta, the meatiness of the morels and the delightfully fresh asparagus.

This little café seats only 24, and if you enjoy watching the chef cook, the best seats are at the counter. The atmosphere is light, bright and casual. There are cushions for your back and a rack of reading material, although at dinner it will probably be too busy for that.

Jazz notes fill the air most Thursday nights. With Jalbert on classical guitar and Bret Crawford on soprano and tenor sax, the duo plays a variety of standards ranging from swing to bossa nova.

With its innovative cuisine and upbeat ambience, Pomona's is carving a niche in the Adams County restaurant scene that is unique and most welcome. 

Pomona's Woodfired Bakery Café

213 E. York St., Biglerville

717-677-7014

www.gettysburgbakingco.com

Woodfired dishes and pizza

Hours

Breakfast

8 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Saturday only

Lunch

11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Wednesday to Saturday

Dinner

5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m. Wednesday to Saturday

Dinner reservations recommended

Competitive pricing

Retail Hours

8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday to Friday

8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday