



Brick Wood Fire Bistro

Puts the Focus on the Fire

Review by Caroline Miller King
Photography by August Selckmann

There's a new restaurant in town. And although Prince Frederick's Brick Wood Fired Bistro may only be a little over a year old, it has a decidedly mature feel. Already, the eatery is turning out finely honed dishes, with service and atmosphere to match.

Locals have owner Jason Nagers to thank for this well-received addition to the Southern Maryland dining scene. Nagers, who got his start working in various restaurants with his mother, Ronda Tracy, opened Brick last September to bring a new concept to the area. "It's wood-fire inspired," he explained. The theme extends beyond the ample selection of pizzas to other items on the menu, and to the space itself. Exposed brick walls, industrial ceilings, and dark-stained wood floors and tables create an atmosphere that is open and airy, yet warm. Although you'll find a few large TVs in the bar area, Nagers didn't want the restaurant to feel like a casual sports bar,

but something more high-end.

As for the food, Nagers says the focus is on fresh, quality, healthy fare, "We do a lot of things in the oven – wings, oysters, meatballs. We finish our steaks in there. We had a tomato bisque and we charred the tomatoes in the oven. We char the poblanos for our salsa verde in the oven too. We don't do much of anything fried here." He makes a conscious effort to source locally whenever possible: seafood from Thompson's in St. Mary's County, produce from Chesapeake's Bounty and Farming 4 Hunger, ice cream from Spider Hall Farm in Prince Frederick, and herbs from the restaurant's own rooftop garden. Everything is made in the restaurant, from sauces and salad dressings to desserts.

The menu evolves seasonally, but staples remain throughout the year. Nagers designs the menu with help from chef Troy Horn, a graduate of the Culinary Institute of

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America. "I design something, he'll put my idea on a plate, then we try it and tweak it." When we visited, the hybrid fall/winter menu was in place.

To start, we sampled the Oysters Brickafella, featuring spinach, bacon and parmesan, along with the Crab Avocado Stack, served with house-cut kettle chips.



CAROLINE MILLER KING

Oysters Brickafella

We also tried the very popular Roasted Beet Salad: beets, fried goat cheese, walnuts and a drizzle of honey atop a bed of crisp arugula. All three were delicious.

We skipped the tempting selection of burgers and sandwiches to try one of



CAROLINE MILLER KING

The White House

the main attractions: wood-fired pizza. Cooked in the 1,000-degree oven, the crust comes out slightly charred and crisp on the edges, but still wonderfully chewy. The house red sauce is made with San Marzano tomatoes, but we went for the White House, with its garlic, smoked gouda, fresh mozzarella, goat cheese, arugula and basil oil. Other customer-favorite pizzas include the Salumi (red sauce, Italian meats and smoked mozzarella), the Jordy (red sauce, roasted eggplant, lemon-whipped ricotta, Parmesan and basil) and the Maryland Crab (jumbo lump, scallions, tomato and Old Bay-buttered crust). The Gannon, featuring pepperoni and pepperoncini, is



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named after Nagers' little brother, who loves spicy food.

For our "main" course, we ordered the Imperial Filet a la Bearnaise – a six-ounce, house-cut filet mignon topped with garlic mashed potatoes, crab imperial and bearnaise, served over asparagus. It was decadent. Other entrees Nagers suggested included the Cioppino (a saffron-infused seafood stew), the Shrimp & Grits (topped with tasso lime gravy), and the House BBQ Ribs (featuring the house BBQ sauce and served with smoked gouda mac & cheese). We finished the meal with a Cast Iron Apple Crisp, served with that Spider Hall ice cream and baked in ... the wood-fired oven, of course.



Imperial Filet a la Bearnaise

Besides a line-up of Maryland beers – at least six drafts are dedicated to the state's brews – and a selection of wines served from the tap or by the bottle, the drink menu includes thoughtfully crafted seasonal cocktails, some garnished with the herbs grown at the restaurant.

Brick is open for dinner every night of the week, lunch on Wednesday through Friday, and brunch on Sunday. The lunch menu includes Speedy Combos designed for people with a short lunch break: soups, salads, sandwiches and pizzas are two for just \$10. Sunday brunch, with its bottomless bloody Marys and mimosas, has been a big hit. "It's a nice, tasteful a la carte menu," said Nagers, "and it's kid-friendly." The most popular dish is a play on eggs benedict, served Southern-style with a fried green tomato, and topped with crab. "On Sundays, we hope people will come in for brunch, maybe after church, then hang out for the football game," Nagers added.

The restaurant has other specials over the course of the week. Some Saturday nights over the winter will feature live music. Beer and wine dinners occur about every six weeks, and a special wine dinner will be held on Valentine's weekend. Brick also hosts kids' cooking classes, where little ones get to make and roll out dough to prepare their

own pizzas. You can check the website or Facebook page for details on these events and more.

Nagers is pleased with the success of his restaurant so far, and looks forward to a bright future featuring all things wood-fired. "We love when a guest comes in and they notice the little things, because we take pride in what we do and

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we wouldn't do it any other way."

Brick Wood Fired Bistro is located at 60 Sherry Lane in Prince Frederick. For more information, call 443-486-5799 or visit brickwfb.com. •

Brick's Roasted Corn Chowder

INGREDIENTS:

½ C. roasted chipotle peppers	2 T. butter
6 ears corn, husks and skin removed	1 sweet onion, diced
2 C. potatoes, peeled and diced	4 stalks celery, diced
6 C. low-sodium chicken stock	1 C. diced bacon
	6 cloves garlic, diced
	2 tsp. dijon mustard
	½ C. heavy cream
	Mustard microgreens (optional for garnish)

PREPARATION:

Preheat the grill to medium-high heat. Grill the chipotle peppers and corn, removing after slight charring on all sides (5-6 minutes). Dice peppers and cut kernels off the cob.

In a saucepan, cover the potatoes with 2 cups of water and 1 cup of the chicken stock. Bring to a boil and cook until fork-tender, about 15 minutes.

Heat the butter in a soup pot over medium heat. Add the peppers, onion, celery, bacon and all but ¼ cup of the corn. Cook for 5-6 minutes, until golden brown. Add garlic and stir for another minute, then add potatoes, 2 quarts of water, remaining chicken stock and mustard, and simmer for 30 minutes. Stir in the heavy cream and heat thoroughly. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve in bowls, garnishing each with some mustard microgreens and charred corn kernels. Yields 8 servings.

Brick Weekly Specials

Monday: Kids Eat Free

(one kids meal per adult entree)

Tuesday: Two-4-Tuesday

(two pizzas for \$25)

Wednesday: LIVE

(acoustic music at 6:30 p.m. and ½ off carafes of wine on tap)

Sunday: Sunday Funday

(brunch 10 a.m.-2 p.m.;

½ off bottles of wine and \$15 burger & brew special all day)