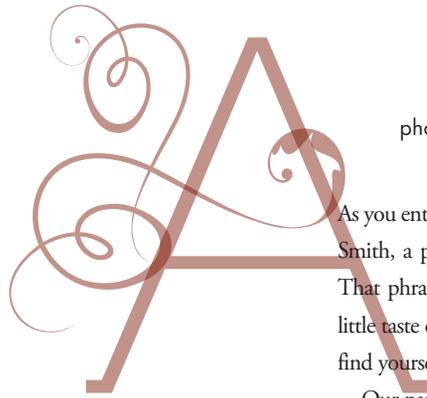


A TRADITIONAL TREAT

photos courtesy of David Hughes for Rightmind Advertising, Inc.
by Jena Anderson

“WILLKOMMEN
to a little bit of
Germany....”



As you enter the doors of the newly re-opened Emmy's Restaurant in Fort Smith, a painted wall reads: “Willkommen to a little bit of Germany.” That phrase says it all. When you visit Emmy's, you truly experience a little taste of the country – from the music to the beer to the cuisine, you find yourself on a little European getaway.

Our party ventured in and the first thing I noticed was the lighting. It was perfect. Natural light gleamed in from the stained glass windows all around the restaurant. It was warm and comforting and the opposite of what I had expected – a dark, rustic environment. We wandered around the spacious dining area and eventually found ourselves in the bar. It sits slightly secluded from the rest of the restaurant; the brick walls are painted a deep, passionate red – the light? Perfect. It has the dim light I had expected of the whole restaurant. It isn't gloomy, though, just dark enough to relax you. It is the perfect place to unwind after a long day, or fill a table with friends for good conversation and the best tasting beer you've probably ever had, Spaten. (I'd stand this behind this brand so much as to say that my very pretty, very picky college friend who always had a poor young college boy running around trying to find her liquor at a party because she hated beer, would like it.)

Danielle, a colleague of mine, and two friends finally made our way to our seats where we nestled at a simple wooden table and waited for our German feast to begin. While we waited for our drinks, mine was a glass of German wine called Schmittshone Liebfraumilch, which was sweet and refreshing, my friend had the Vertikal Blue Riesling Mosel, we noticed the music. The traditional German music, that you may fear would be as annoying as the music they blare in Hollister when your shopping with your children, was actually delightful. It wasn't too loud, or too soft, just the right amount of upbeat to actually elevate the mood.

And although the setting and atmosphere had certainly won our vote, the big test had just arrived at our table. The food. German food. Coming from someone who hates cottage cheese, but has never actually tried it; refuses to try a tunafish sandwich because of the smell, and tried seafood for the first time a few weeks ago only because my boss was sitting next to me and reviewing food is an aspect of my job – I am, undoubtedly, a “picky eater.”

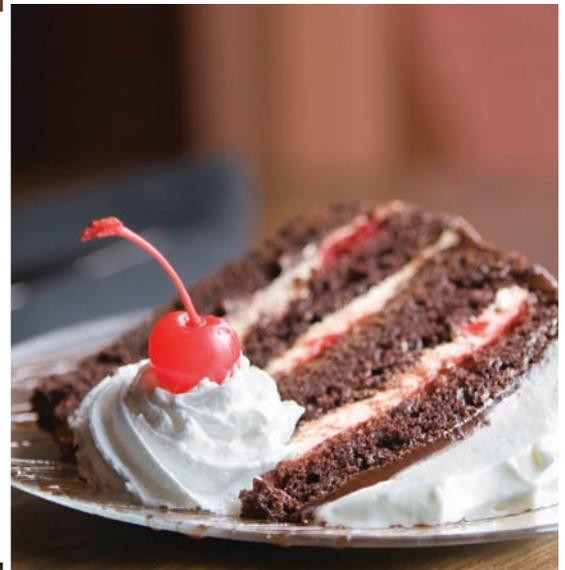
So here it was. An appetizer platter covered with food I had never seen, let alone tried in the 22 years of my existence. Things I would normally snuff my nose at like a 5-year-old to his peas. I took baby steps and started with the



Above: The founders of Emmy's Restaurant, Emmy Werner and Al Thome.

Fried Cheese. The Swiss had a unique flavor that everyone at the table found interesting and enjoyable. Next, I tried the bratwurst, which is coated in batter and fried. Then the knackwurst, dipped in honey mustard. Each one passed my test. Finally, I braved what I thought to be the most unusual dish – the German egg roll. Filled with spices, sauerkraut, pork and beef, it's the kind of creative, memorable dish that makes me slightly embarrassed I've held on to my 5-year-old mentality when it comes to cuisine.

After the appetizers came the soup and salad. Not soup or salad. But both, served one at a time, one way. No chicken noodle or broccoli cheese substitutes, potato soup. Potato soup that after one bite answers the question of why they don't serve other options. Salad, served with dill dressing, not ranch. Don't ask, they don't have it. Just dill. Perhaps, so people like me have to try it and realize it blows your



everyday salad dressing out of the water.

Before the entrées arrived I noticed how we were being served. The soup didn't arrive until each of us was through with our appetizer plate. The salad didn't come until we each had finished our soup. There is no rushing, no cramming the table. No making room so you can keep your salad plate when your entrée comes. You get to take your time and enjoy your food – the way a true dining experience should be.

As the entrées arrived, each plate was warm and colorful. The Beef Rouladen Mit Kartoffel Klose was my favorite. It was tender, juicy and full of flavor. The dill pickle on the inside of the rolled beef was a delicious surprise. Danielle's favorite was the Cordon Bleu – Emmy's bestseller. The chicken is dipped in egg, hand-breaded and sautéed. It is stuffed with ham and cheese. Traditionally, it is served with a fresh fried egg on top. Danielle went the traditional route and notes that the egg is a must do. The Reuben Chicken, baked and topped with sauerkraut, Swiss cheese and Thousand Island dressing has a fun, spunky flavor and the veal J'ager Schnitzel, the dish I was most hesitant to try since I've never had veal, was, I must admit, delicious. It is topped with onions, mushrooms and gravy and served with a side of spatzle (a thick pasta) and gravy. Not only was everything great tasting and beyond expectation,



the other two members of our party – staunch, young men, “garbage disposals” if you will, couldn't even finish the generous portion sizes that Emmy's serves.

Even though we sat stuffed and satisfied, and had said our “I can't take another bite,” excuses, we couldn't pass up sharing two out-of-this-world desserts. As a chocolate fan (it's made up a majority of my diet through high school and college) I couldn't wait to try the Black Forest Torte. I figured it would be heavy and rich, like most chocolate desserts, and a few bites would satisfy me. I was wrong. This light, refreshing torte is layered with cherry Kirsch liqueur-scented chocolate cake, maraschino cherries and Kirsch-laced whipped cream. I had to stop myself from devouring the whole piece. The other dessert we tried was the Apple Strudel. Served with vanilla ice cream, it was dubbed “one of my favorite desserts” from one member of our party. And as someone who surprisingly doesn't like pie or desserts with fruit, I braved a bite and was once again reminded – my dad has been right all along, I've truly been missing out. •••