

Emmy's Too

A Favorite Returns

There are two good reasons Joe Calderera's new German restaurant in the former Hall at Taliano's isn't called "Joe's" – the original owners, Al and Emmy Thorne.

Open from 1962 until New Year's Eve 2004, Emmy's German Restaurant became a Fort Smith institution. The couple delighted in introducing Fort Smithians to the tastes of their native Germany from the eatery's tiny house on North 11th Street.

Calderera grew up in a restaurant family (owners of Taliano's Italian Restaurant) and his family was very close to Al and Emmy.

"Emmy's was always my favorite place to eat," he said. "And as I got older, Emmy and I grew to be great friends, would hang out every night. So I bought the business and opened this restaurant myself as a tribute to them, to keep their recipes alive."

The heart of the menu should be familiar to long-time lovers of the old restaurant. For anyone new to the restaurant or to German food, however, it may be hard to know where to start: Every dish sounds simply wunderbar.

Calderera has some recommendations. For starters, Al's famous Deep Fried Cheese may not be the most German of appetizers (try the Potato Pancakes or Knackwurst for that), but it cannot be missed: a block of battered Swiss cheese, deep fried and served with spicy and honey mustards – so much more exciting than the same old fried mozzarella.

Beef Rouladen Mit Kartoffel Kloss (layers of thinly sliced beef with horseradish, mustard, bacon, onions, celery and spices all wrapped around a dill pickle and covered in rich brown gravy) may sound unusual, but is superb. The many varieties of Schnitzel

(breaded pork or veal cutlets, served with savory accoutrements) are popular favorites, and the briny braised Sauerbraten puckers beeflovers' lips with pleasure.

Steaks seasoned with a secret and uncommon blend of spices are seared on a flat griddle rather than traditional grill. The star of the menu, by popular demand, isn't even German: Emmy's original Chicken Cordon Bleu. "We sell so much of that dish," Calderera said. "People just love it."

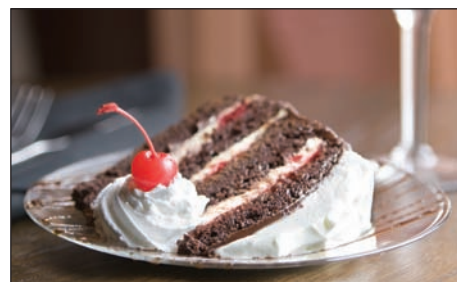
Although Emmy's serves far more food than most people can finish (entrees come with complementary potato soup, salad with dill dressing, and in addition to any sides paired with the entrée, all diners share family-style German-fried potatoes and sweet pickled red cabbage), be sure to order dessert. Best bet is either the fresh apple streudel or the delightfully Kirsch-flavored Black Forest Torte. Both are homemade and taste it.




Joe Calderera, owner



Portraits of Al and Emmy Thorne hang on the walls of the remodeled dining room at Emmy's Too.



The building, built as a church in 1886, has also received a remarkable makeover, seamlessly blending photos and old items from Emmy's past with new touches like locally manufactured oak tables and a new bar.

Calderera said he wants everyone to feel like part of the Emmy's family. "We're not a white tablecloth restaurant," he said. "You can dress up, but you don't have to. We're casual. We love kids, love families eating together. Emmy's has always been about sharing good meals and memories together, and that's what I want this to be for Fort Smith, the old Emmy's for a new generation." 

Emmy's German Restaurant, 200 North 13th Street, Fort Smith. 479-242-3669. Open Tuesday-Saturday 5-9 p.m. Full bar. Reservations accepted, not required. Weekly e-mail specials available by signing up for mailing list at www.emmystoo.com.