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“A Senior Perspective”

by
Tom Holbrook

It has never been my intention for this column to become a “Restaurant Review,” with me as the chief critic, however, I am a man that loves good food and find it difficult not to tell you guys whenever I happen onto a place that seems to go over the top in ambiance and food quality. You will find that I only speak of the good eateries and never mention those who are sub-par in my humble opinion.

Because of an article in The Village Magazine this month Judy and I visited a new restaurant in Baylee Plaza just north of the Villages on Rt. 441, before you get to Rt. 42. Isabella’s Ristorante is the name and Mediterranean Cuisine is their game. Between you and me I’ve never really understood just what Mediterranean Cuisine means. It’s not Italian... It’s not Greek... yet it is both of these and blends of other Mediterranean countries as well.

Spain, Italy, Malta, France, Greece, Turkey, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia ... these are all countries which nudge up to the Mediterranean Sea at one place or another and because of their proximity to one another their herbs, spices, and other ingredients run together to make exciting adventures in good eating. Such was the case at Isabella’s last Saturday night.

Judy decided on a salad of Arugula greens, Feta or Gorgonzola cheese (*not sure which*) and an Herb Vinaigrette dressing. I chose a garden salad which included the same cheese and I also chose the Herb Vinaigrette dressing, a pleasant alternative to the more common Balsamic Vinaigrette. Both were absolutely delicious, especially with the gratis appetizer bread and olive oil/ white bean hummus dip. For the entrée I ordered the dry rub Rib Eye steak, which was cooked a perfect medium-rare, and Judy ordered Bucatini pasta. Bucatini has a long structure like Spaghetti, but larger in width and is fantastic.

The food is cooked to order so waiting time is a little longer than other restaurants but well worth the wait. Ralph and Deana Luisi, the owners, are from Manhattan, NY where Ralph was an Executive Chef for several fine restaurants there. A visit to Deana’s parents in The Villages encouraged them to move here and open their own restaurant so Ralph could introduce his delicious cuisine to this area. For those who like excellent food with an identity of its own, in pleasant surroundings you need to try Isabella’s Ristorante in Baylee Plaza. Next time I’m trying the Lamb Shank, maybe I’ll see you there. Their phone number is 352-307-5120 and they do take reservations. Bon appetit’!

I wonder if those who live in this area are truly appreciative of how many new restaurants have come into town this past year. More and more each month are opening which means more and more great food for you and me.

Speaking of restaurants aren't you glad none of the restaurants have smoking sections anymore. All my friends who are smokers, don't get mad at me now, I still love you. I was a smoker for 20 years and enjoyed every little cancer stick I stuck in my mouth, but you know there's nothing worse than a reformed smoker, unless of course it's a reformed drunk. Besides, I want to see you guys stay around a little longer. It really bothers me to be in a room with smoke anymore. It tears me up in the eyes and in the lungs. I know there are a bunch of you guys out there who wish restaurants still had smoking sections for you to puff away in "without bothering us non-smokers" but seriously now, having a "separate" section for smoking is like taking a leak in a swimming pool... sooner or later everyone's going to be swimming in the mess.

Speaking of messes... someone said a recent medical report indicated that 3 out of 4 people suffered from diarrhea. Does that mean the 4th person enjoys it? Questions like that are always coming up in my mind... questions about statements or phrases that just don't make sense. Take for instance....If someone says "you can put your two cents in, if you want," does that mean it now costs more than "a penny for your thoughts?" Who gets that extra penny?

How many of have gone to Publix or Albertson's to purchase some cured ham and asked the butcher from what disease it was cured? This one just came up for me... getting ready to renew my driver's license I noticed it wouldn't be long before I wouldn't have any hair left on my head... when that day comes what will I put under "Color of hair" on my application? Being a man that appreciates the written word and the power of words I was wondering if people who couldn't read really appreciate Alphabet Soup like we do.

Well, you can see I've got a lot of unanswered questions running around in my head. Maybe I'll share more with you in future articles. Have a great week.

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