

Gerard's  
Contemporary Italian In Historic Greer  
by M.A. Wells

When a great new restaurant hits Greenville, there is usually a lot of initial conversation about it. When a great new restaurant hits Greer, there is a continual loud buzz as people want to make sure they heard you right about the location and quality of the food. It takes a lot of confidence to put a restaurant in an area not traditionally known for dining, and even more confidence to name the restaurant after the chef. But in both cases, the self-assurance of Gerard's is going to pay off.

Conveniently located at 102 East Poinsett St. in downtown Greer, the restaurant is easy to find and will soon be easier to park near as a 60-space lot behind it nears completion. The restaurant experience begins as you stroll down a brick walk along the side of the building toward the front door. The outdoor patio, enclosed with a wrought iron fence and covered with a wooden arbor, is populated with round tables and chairs that don't look like they would be comfortable but are. Gerard is currently looking at adapting the patio for winter use, as it is a much-requested dining location.

Upon entering the front door of the restaurant you are greeted by a comfortable combination of old and new. The brick wall and original beams expose the history of the building as an old five-and-dime and hardware store. The new suspended curving pieces from the ceiling give it a modern feel of suspended clouds. The plastered walls give off a wonderful patina that only hand painting or a hundred years of history can bring. The artwork, some of which is local, is colorful and restful at the same time. There is an abundance of hand-blown Italian glass in the restaurant, including the lights over the curved bar. The tables are set with crisp linens, napkins are carefully folded and fresh flowers are centered to complete the arrangement.

Once you are seated, you'll want to spend some time perusing the two-page menu that offers appetizers, pasta, seafood, chicken, beef, veal, and, of course, dessert. The chef and proprietor, Gerard Cribben, has perfected each dish through years of experience at world-class restaurants in Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico. One of the most popular starters is the Mushroom Caps filled with Crabmeat in Garlic Lemon Sauce (\$8.95), but my favorite is the Fried Calamari served with Pizzaiola Sauce (\$7.95). There is definitely enough to share especially since you need to save room for dessert. The Seafood Bisque (\$5.95) is one where the emphasis is on seafood, and you will not be disappointed with the ingredients or the quantity. Along with your appetizer and meal comes Gerard's special bread that is so good you'll want to make a meal of it. But, don't dig too deeply into this bottomless basket, as the portions of the other offerings are also substantial.

For entrées, the linguine with shrimp, scallops, clams, calamari and fish in a pink cream sauce (\$19.95) is as delectable as it sounds. The Broiled Scallops in the shell (\$19.95) are mouthwatering. Gerard is very particular about his seafood; he only buys "dry scallops" that have not been soaked in water. The presentation of this dish is exquisite. The scallops are served in shells and surrounded by risotto and baby spinach dappled with sherry cream. Although Gerard loves seafood, he is equally respectful of beef, veal and chicken. The Veal Scaloppine Stuffed with Crabmeat and Asparagus in a Black Truffle Sauce (\$21.95) is another customer favorite. I was told by one patron that the lamb is the "best I have ever had!" But remember, save room for dessert. All the desserts are made in-house, and the Crème Brulee is a

favorite of both the customers and the chef. The Chocolate Crème Brulee is as delicious as it is different.

Aside from the ambience and the food, Gerard's has something else that many other fine restaurants are lacking - excellent service. The young wait staff has been trained well, and it is an on-going process each week. Our waiter was receptive to our questions and capable of answering all of them. He was personable without being intrusive, and that is an art.

The wine list is extensive, and, even better, includes a wide selection of wines by the glass. Using uncommon common sense, Gerard states that "our customers may want a white [wine] with their appetizer and a red [wine] with their meal. We want to accommodate them as much as we can." What a concept!

Gerard's is part of the Greer Partnership for Tomorrow revitalization and growth. If all the shops have his fine standards, Greer will become a standard destination for the surrounding communities.

Gerard's is open for lunch Monday thru Friday from 11:30am-2:30pm and for dinner Monday thru Thursday 5:30pm-9:30pm and Friday and Saturday 5:50pm-10:30pm. To make reservations call 864-879-0070.

Gerard's Rating

Entrees \$17 and up

Service: good

Value: excellent

Food: good

Ambience: excellent