



## The Open Hearth

### 40 Years Strong

By A. Parks

For the most part, I have enjoyed the steady growth of eateries in Greenville over the past years – it’s added to the diversity of our community.

However, there are a few (and only a few) restaurants that have stood the test of time, not only surviving but prospering with the growth of that industry in Greenville. The Open Hearth on Wade Hampton in Taylors is one of those restaurants. Jimmy Melehes, who owns and operates the Open Hearth, is the reason why.

The Open Hearth legacy started 40 years ago, when Jimmy’s father opened The Open Hearth in its present location. Mr. Melehes had a restaurant in downtown Greenville, across from the then-popular Poinsett Hotel, but saw an exodus beginning and didn’t want to get lost in the evacuation.

Moving from downtown Greenville to Taylors must have been some leap of faith. But long before Kevin Costner heard the voice say “if you build it they will come,” Mr. Melehes did. And he built the Open Hearth. And people came.

Jimmy’s restaurant isn’t fancy or pretentious, because formality isn’t the reason one chooses to eat there. One goes to The Open Hearth because the chef prepares and serves up some of the best beef, fish, and chicken dishes Greenville has to offer.

Before I get ahead of myself, I want to comment on their wines. Their list is small and moderately priced – I don’t recall any bottle over \$23. Nonetheless, the Melehes take the hassle out of complicated choices by naming a few select wines that compliment their fare particularly well. We chose a \$22 California cabernet, which was perfect with our beef entrees.

My wife and I have been enjoying the Hearth for 14 years and, at the same time, have developed a need to reduce our red-meat intake. For the most part, we’ve done a good job. But not at the Hearth.

On our most recent visit, my taste buds were tempted by the daily special, a fresh flounder dish (offered baked or fried). But my wife ordered the filet mignon wrapped in

bacon. And although we usually choose different entrees, I couldn't pass up what I have come to know as one of the best steaks I've ever tasted. And so I also ordered the filet mignon wrapped in bacon.

Entrees are served with the usual baked or french fried potatoes, onion rings and a dinner salad with choice of dressing. I ordered my filet the only way I think great beef should be prepared – rare – while my wife requested hers to be cooked medium. When the plates arrived, the filets were perfectly prepared (well, mine was perfect, and hers was medium). The kitchen gave us exactly what we ordered, and in today's world that's an accomplishment.

Dinner at The Open Hearth was, and always has been, excellent food served by an attentive wait staff. The longevity and balance of service, flavor and quality can be elusive at some restaurants, but not at The Open Hearth.

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