

Old friend returns to Browncroft area

Karen Deyle

Reviews (Dining) – December 24, 2009 - 5:00am



GRETCHEN LEE CARLETTA

The original Wintonaire opened on the same site in the mid-1940s, according to the restaurant's Web site. The location had sat abandoned for more than 8 years.

THE PLACE

The holidays, however you celebrate, are a time for memories, home and family. The newly opened Wintonaire epitomizes all three. Owners Terry and Dick Flynn have made this a family effort with daughter, sons, aunts, parents and cousins as the core staff. Their vision is to be a homey gathering place for people in and around the Browncroft neighborhood. And as far as memories, longtime Rochesterians will recognize the name, returning to the original location from a favorite restaurant of the '50s. The Web site tells the history, noting that the name came from the early days of air conditioning giving it a "cool" feeling.

THE FOOD

Three of us split two appetizers, the stuffed mushrooms (\$6.99) and the mozzarella cheese sticks (\$5.49). The mushrooms were a delight: cooked nicely al dente so that the cap still had substance and support. A seasoned crabmeat stuffing with just a hint of sherry was broiled to add crispness. Served over a bed of sautéed spinach, they were satisfying and flavorful.

One companion chose the Browncroft Beef Buster (\$6.99), a generous hamburger topped with grilled onions, bacon, tomato and cheese on a garlic roll. It was done as ordered, medium rare with a hint of pink. The toppings were juicy and the accompanying fries had a crisp, seasoned coating.

My second companion chose the King Cut of Prime Rib (\$19.99), available Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The slice was generous and tall with a warm pink center. It was served au jus with a cup on the side, which I prefer to having it poured over the meat. Horseradish was available for the asking.

There are two offerings from our neighboring cities to the west and east: the Buffalo classic beef on 'weck and the Syracuse favorite chicken riggies. I chose the Riggies (\$11.99), a large bowl of cheese-filled pasta tossed with chicken, peppers and onion in marinara. The rigatonis are crimped at the end to prevent the cheese from escaping and mingling with the sauce. Grilled chicken breast slices were tossed with the sauce, resulting in flavors that are essentially chicken cacciatore.

THE DRINKS

The comfortable bar is original to the old Wintonaire. Everything else was renovated top to bottom. The bar is congenial and full of folks who are already clearly at home. On the stormy night we visited, we were waiting for our last party member, and were treated to a round for everyone in the bar, courtesy of a regular patron. Our bartender recommended some different twists to our orders, and let us sample before we committed.

THE ATMOSPHERE

This place knows its demographic, choosing classic rock music of the 1960s and '70s — perfect for the 40- to 50-something Browncroft homeowners and those old enough to remember the original establishment. Music and TVs in the bar and dining areas are kept at a level that still allows conversation; something that often escapes many higher-end restaurants. Tables are far enough apart to avoid crowding and jostling.

THE SERVICE

The hostess was friendly, and kept an eye out for our late party member. She chatted with us about the owners (her nephews) and their goals for making it a neighborhood place. Our server was friendly and helped us with several choices.

Freelancer Karen Deyle of Rochester is our restaurant critic. E-mail deyledines@aol.com.

WINTONAIRE

Address: 628 N. Winton Road (near Browncroft Boulevard).

Phone: (585) 730-8350.

On the Web: www.wintonaire.com.

Hours: 10:30 a.m. to 2 a.m. Monday through Saturday; noon to 2 a.m. Sunday.

Diet: Vegetarian items; will make other dietary accommodations.

Kids: Seven menu items, including beverage, \$4.99.

Accessibility: Level entry, accessible restrooms.

Parking: Small private lot. Parking arrangements with three nearby businesses and churches.

Prices: Lunch, \$8 to \$12. Appetizers, \$7 to \$12. Dinner, \$11 to \$28.



The Wintonaire at 628 N. Winton Road is a homey gathering place for people in and around the Browncroft neighborhood.