

What's Cookin'!

by John Campbell

For this month's What's Cookin' column, we're deviating from the usual review-style format in favor of an interview, or Q & A session. I spoke with Madeleine's Fusion Restaurant co-owners Tim and Tyra Mills after a meal I will remember for a long, long time.

Tyra: Did you meet Madeleine? She's our daughter. She's a year and a half old. Tim and I didn't plan on having any kids. We bought this building and planned on having a restaurant here. We had tossed around a bunch of different names for it and when we found out we were having a baby and found out it was a girl we decided to name the restaurant after her.

Tim: We've been here a year this month and we're very happy. We officially opened July 1st of last year and it's just kinda been evolving. We had the first floor to begin with and then we opened the wine cellar in August. It took eight guys a month to dig it out. We had to hand dig everything and bring the dirt out in buckets.

John: How do you describe your culinary approach?

Tim: Our food is eclectic. We blend different cuisines. We like to use themes and explore a country or a region, but it's really a blend. Like taking Hawaiian and combining it with Tex Mex or taking South American food and mixing it with Caribbean food. Or we'll take one focal cuisine, say we'll explore Italy, but we'll put a hint of something else in there.

John: So the menu changes?

Tim: Every five days. It works well for us. We get all of our fish in from Hawaii daily. Our fish, whatever you order here, was in the water yesterday. We have fisherman that catch fish for us in Hawaii and a guy that buys it from them and ships it here overnight. All of our pastries, at this point in time, are made for us in Washington D.C. by the ex-Watergate Terrace chef, Albert Uster, and he ships those in three times a week.

Madeleine's A FUSION RESTAURANT An Interview With Tim and Tyra Mills



Freshly prepared lobster and buffalo are only a few of the exquisite menu items that are offered at Madeleine's.

Tyra: We are looking for a pastry chef. We'd like to do more in house things.

Tim: Yes. Our goal is to expand into the building next to us and turn the downstairs of that building into the kitchen. Once we do that, we'll be turning this kitchen into an hors d'oeuvre kitchen and we'll be turning the upstairs into a lounge with sofas and coffee tables and things like that. So, that's the goal we hope to accomplish by next year. We are working right now to purchase a couple of more buildings downtown to put a couple of different types of restaurants downtown. The mayor has worked with us tremendously to help with this redevelopment program. He's really the reason we have our liquor license today.

John: You've always served beer and wine, but today you added liquor, right?

Tim: Right. We just got our 3-way liquor license today. What we're doing with our liquor is very different than anybody else in town. We're doing all super premiums. You can come in here and get a drink for the same price that you would pay at another restaurant for their rail liquor only here we'll be pouring Maker's Mark, Tanqueray 10 and Hanger 1 Vodka and so on. We'll also be carrying a large

selection of single barrel bourbons, a large selection of high-end tequilas, vodkas, a lot of Russian vodkas, Scotch, we've got a lot of Scotches coming in that are just incredible. This is going to be a lot of fun.

John: You also have the best wine list I've ever seen in Evansville.

Tim: We have about 150 wines.

John: Did you personally select the wines?

Tim: Yes. We hand pick all of our wines. We have a wine cellar of about 1500 bottles.

John: Why did you choose downtown, off the beaten path and away from the business district?

Tyra: Well, we live down here.

Tim: We advertise as being in the heart of Evansville's Historic District. There is uniqueness here and we're a unique restaurant. This is a unique setting. You know, the biggest comment from people is that they feel like they are not in Evansville anymore when they come here for dinner.

Tyra: We love Evansville. We've chosen to stay here for seven years and now we're rooted here. It's nice to feel like you're in a big city and still go home to your own house at night. You can have the best of both. You can have the best of living in Evansville,

which is a great place to call home, and still be able to come to a restaurant where you feel like you are in a big city.

John: What's on the horizon for Madeleine's?

Tim: Our goal is to put greenhouses in down here. Our long-term goal is, within two years, to be totally self-sufficient on produce year round. We are also getting ready to buy another building and we're looking at putting in an upscale market, not only organic, but a whole foods market. That's what we're looking at doing. This is a great neighborhood. It's very eclectic.

Tyra: You have a lot of diversity here. People want to come downtown; you just have to give them a reason.

Madeleine's is located on the corner of Oak and SE Second Street in scenic Downtown Evansville. Dinner is served from 4:30 p.m.-10:00 p.m. on Tuesday-Thursday, 4:30 p.m.-10:30 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. For reservations call 812-491-8611 and visit their website at www.madeleinesfusion.com.

Read more about Madeleine's in this year's issue of What's Cookin' Dining Guide.

