

# Madeleine's

## A FUSION RESTAURANT

in the *Heart* of Evansville

by John Campbell

For years the Bargetown Market, on the corner of Second and Oak Streets in Evansville's Historic District, sat solemnly vacant. It became another sad reminder of the neglect and general despair of the once thriving downtown neighborhood. Several years ago something unusual began to happen. Someone mowed the grass.

Then people started to show up with tape measures and tool belts. Soon scaffolding went up and before long full-blown construction was under way at the old market. The building slowly began to take on a new look as workers scurried around with lumber and buckets of paint. There was a buzz in the air before the word ever got out: Someone was building a restaurant down here. That someone was Chef Tim Mills and his wife Tyra. The restaurant was Madeleine's.

It seemed an unlikely location for a restaurant in Evansville. Nestled in a residential area between the downtown business district and Historic Haynie's Corner wasn't exactly a high profile position. New Harmony's Cooper House saw Burkhardt Road as better than being off the beaten path and packed up their gear to move east. So why would a professional chef like Tim Mills, who has decades of culinary experience while simultaneously managing multi-million dollar operations, not do the same?

Mills has heard that question a lot and he just smiles. Anyone that has to ask has obviously never set foot in Madeleine's. After years in the making and a series of setbacks and obstacles, Madeleine's is a labor of love. The eclectic flair and originality of Madeleine's cuisine, combined with the interior ambiance and décor, has been fused into the Historic District of Evansville as if it always belonged there.

Chef Mills has every reason to be smiling. His restaurant has set a standard of excellence previously unparalleled in the city of Evansville. Despite some trying hardships and years of work, Tim and Tyra's dream became a reality and their reward can be seen every time a new customer walks through the door.

Once someone discovers Madeleine's, they become part of the family. The warmth and attentiveness of Chef Mills' highly educated, well-trained staff tailors every visit to individualize the unique experience. Madeleine's team understands Tim and Tyra's vision and strives to insure that guests feel the dream come to life. They take a personal approach to each customer and guide patrons through the extensive wine collection and always-changing menu to match every craving. Likewise,

the chefs' willingness to prepare all entrées to accommodate tastes or dietary needs, including exclusive vegetarian dishes, makes Madeleine's a special place for everyone.

As a 1984 graduate of the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, Chef Tim Mills has conceptualized a diverse menu to match Madeleine's unique design. The restaurant provides Evansville residents with the experience one would expect of big city dining. Tim and Tyra often receive comments from guests expressing that they feel as though they aren't in Evansville anymore. Madeleine's truly has a setting and character that carries customers into a realm never before felt in our fair city.

The cuisine is elegant, the atmosphere is electric, but Tim and Tyra insist Madeleine's is not a fine dining restaurant. There is no dress code and no need for reservations. Patrons can

stop in for a glass of wine and a salad, a single barrel Scotch and one of three daily appetizers, a full four-course experience, or just a cold beer on a long, hot day.

Madeleine's entire menu changes every week. Appetizers might include Lobster St. Andre – a spread of Maine Lobster mixed with St. Andre Cheese topped with Curried Rice Threads and served with Raspberry Sauce and crusted breads – one week, followed by Tomato Chutney Barbequed Blue King Shrimp with a Corn and Goat Cheese Torta the next.

Salads vary from exotic Jerked Fish with Ripped Lettuce, Raw Mango, Hot Chilies and Sweet Onions to savory Filet of Beef with Sautéed Fennel, Tomato and Dijon Cream. Soup selections include items such as Bolivian Peanut and Potato Soup with Coriander and Red Chilies or a spicy New Orleans style Gumbo with Fresh Melon Salsa, but for the complete experience guests shouldn't forget the main course.

Chef Mills' one-of-a-kind entrées, like everything prepared in Madeleine's kitchen, utilize the freshest produce available with the highest quality meats and Hawaiian Day Catch fish. The fish order is sent to Hawaii where salty fishermen set out, pull the order fresh from the ocean, then pack and ship daily right to Madeleine's doorstep; fish served on any given night was swimming in the ocean the day before.

Madeleine's culinary works of art are a blend of unique ingredients and international styles. Chef Mills' menu explores a different theme or region every week. Menus are posted on their website ([madeleinesfusion.com](http://madeleinesfusion.com)) with titles such as Madeleine's Explores the Caribbean and New Orleans Meets Pacific Rim. Guests may find French inspiration one week and Italian the next, all fused with flavors gathered from around the world and finished with Chef Mills' personal flair.



Madeleine's ever-changing menu includes wild game when available.

Everything takes on a twist at Madeleine's: Grilled New Zealand Venison and Elk Chops are highlighted with Blueberry Curry Sauce and the Grilled Lamb Chops are paired with Gingered Sweet Potatoes and Pineapple-Macadamia Relish. Cumin-Crusted Coral Cod is served with Yucca Puree, Arugula, and Red Wine Vinaigrette while the Pistachio Nut Crusted Ocean Trout is finished with a Garlic Parsley Buerre Blanc.

Wine is an integral part of the dining experience at Madeleine's. It took eight men a month to remove the earth by hand to create Tim and Tyra's dine-in wine cellar, which opened in August of 2005. The cellar now houses in excess of 1,500 bottles representing over 150 selections including almost twenty premium sakes, old Tawny Ports, sparkling wines, late-harvest wines, and Canadian Ice Wines. White wines range from New Zealand Sauvignon Blancs to Oregon's Domaine Serene Chardonnay and red wines include Flower's Pinot Noir, Ridge Zinfandel, Whitehall Lane Cabernet Sauvignon and the French favorites of Bourgogne, Hermitage, Chateaneuf du Pape, and vintage Bordeaux dating to 1976.

Tim and Tyra Mills officially opened on July 1, 2005, and have had an overwhelming first year of success. Plans are in the works for kitchen expansion with nearby produce sustaining greenhouses, a whole foods market and café, and much more.

When construction began over five years ago, downtown residents began to realize that the old market wasn't the only location undergoing transformation. Many of the once noble houses that had been split into dilapidated apartments were being restored to single-family homes again. Abandoned houses began to show signs of life. Families were moving back downtown, with children. Neighbors who had lived as strangers stopped to say hello and even the Can Lady began to walk with a bit of spring in her step. Things began to change downtown. A sense of renewed pride filled the historic quarter and Madeleine's opened in the heart of it all. ■

