

Former Savoy chef goes rustic

Plus, a hot new Highway 7 restaurant; chow down at Richmond Hill's food fest and more

by Jon Sufrin

FROM FARM TO FARMHOUSE TAVERN

As a saucier at London's hoity-toity Savoy, Daniel Janetos cooked for some illustrious clientele. But he'd trade that any day for his current gig as head chef at the rustic Farmhouse Tavern, opened last month at Dupont and Dundas, where his carefully curated menu highlights Ontario's bounty.

Farmhouse Tavern is the project of Darcy MacDonell, who was previously the general manager at Yorkville's La Soci  t  . He'd been mulling the concept about in his head for a while and recently ventured to New York City for inspiration — checking out such restaurants as the Breslin and Peels — along with a stop in Montreal to check out Joe Beef and Au Pied de Cochon.

The new restaurant features two rooms, each seating about 30 and having a distinct vibe: one has a farmhouse appeal, complete with barn doors, and the other is more of a tavern. A side patio that seats 42 also houses a wall of potted herbs and a custom-built smoker.

In the open kitchen, Janetos — a George Brown grad who was previously sous-chef at Buca — sources his ingredients from such local purveyors as Jim Giggie, Best Baa Farm, Marc's Mushrooms and more. Meanwhile, Ontario craft brews and VQA wines round out the drinks selection.

As an appetizer, the ploughman's platter (\$23) features braised cabbage, a smoked oyster, Glengarry cheese, a lightly pickled Harlequin duck egg, house-made mustard, house-made

bread and thick slabs of smoked Berkshire bacon.

The fish dish (\$24) sees both Georgian Bay whitefish and Ontario rainbow trout set atop fingerling potatoes with a pool of bouillabaisse underneath. On top is a dollop of garlic mayonnaise, along with pickled tomatoes for acidity.

With its rock music soundtrack and rustic-chic ambience, this is a west end restaurant through and through — though it does take reservations (and by text, too).

Farmhouse Tavern, 1627 Dupont St., 416-561-9114.

GRAB SOME AMERICAN FAVES AT SMASH

Taking over the old Bluestone Bistro space in Markham is Smash Kitchen & Bar, a new project from Lewis Allen. The restaurateur, who previously owned the Shopsy's deli chain for eight years, describes the new concept as an "upscale-casual American-influenced restaurant."

Inspired by such south-of-the-border eateries as In-N-Out Burger and Grimaldi's Pizzeria, Smash Kitchen's menu features a selection of Yankee favourites, such as griddle-smashed burgers (\$12 to \$15), baby back ribs (\$25) and buttermilk-fried chicken (\$18).

Also on offer is the brick chicken (\$20), which sees a half chicken cooked on a charbroiler with a weight on top to tenderize it. Smash Kitchen also has a coal-fired oven for its selection of thin-crust pizzas (\$11 to \$15).

Desserts include homemade doughnuts (\$6) and s'mores (\$7).



Clockwise from top: Smash owner Lewis Allen (centre) with exec chef Mark Esguerra (right) and GM Jason Goodis, the ploughman's platter at Farmhouse Tavern and the Dog & Bear's summer trifle

In the kitchen is chef Mark Esguerra, previously of the Miller Tavern and Richmond Hill's Fraticelli's.

Allen is confident that the restaurant, which opened at the end of May, will catch on. "It's a very new concept to Unionville," he says.

Smash Kitchen & Bar, 4261 Highway 7 E., 905-940-2000.

GET YOUR BRIT ON AT THE DOG & BEAR

Opened just in time to cheer on England in the Euro Cup, the Dog & Bear takes over the space that was once the Social, bringing Queen West a traditional British pub that aims to provide great food, low prices and good company. The idea is to give Toronto a fresh take on British food, not unlike the city's newest slew of Brit-themed spots like the Oxley, the Bristol Yard and the Grove.

The Dog & Bear team includes Richard Lambert and Jesse Girard, of Parts & Labour, the Hoxton and the Social. The venue is an ode to Lambert's father's old pub in the U.K., also named the Dog & Bear.

The newly designed space includes a 30-something-foot bar, cozy booth seating and plenty of standing room for knocking back a pint with friends.

Vintage knick-knacks littered about the place include photographs of Lord Gladstone and Lord Dufferin (an ode to the area), a 1903 flag, portraits of kings behind the bar and Royal Doulton figurines of past royals. Even the footer on the receipt says "God Save the King."

In the kitchen is chef Andrew Eade (previously of Splendido,

Luma, Scaramouche, Auberge du Pommier), and, as expected, the menu is full of comfort British pub fare. To start, there's a Welsh rarebit (\$5.50), a homemade Cornish pasty (\$5), a ploughman's board (\$15) and an English garden salad (\$9).

For mains, there's fish and chips (made with beer batter and sustainable haddock from the east coast, \$17), a full English breakfast (\$12), bangers and mash (\$12) and chicken curry (\$15). To finish, there's the seasonal summer trifle (\$6) and a sticky-toffee pudding served with custard (\$6).

The Dog & Bear, 1100 Queen St. W., 647-352-8601.

HOP ON THE ITALIAN TRAIN

Italian restaurants are way overdone in the GTA — but not Italian restaurants with a train station theme (Terroni did it first, with Bar Centrale, but who's keeping track?). Now hitting St. Clair West is Stazione Centrale, from veteran restaurateur Armando Pronesti (previously of Ferro Bar & Caf  ).

While the decor features many train station throwbacks (like restored train lights behind the bar), so too does the menu, which has been divided into such sections as First Stop, for apps, Second Stop, for pastas, and Side Cars, for extras.

The beet salad (\$10) is a sweet tower of marinated red and yellow beets stacked between layers of ch  vre, with a touch of balsamic vinegar and a beet reduction. It's dazzled with rice wine vinaigrette, shallots and pickled kohlrabi.

The beer-braised beef short ribs with a side of frites (\$18) are sprinkled with house-made yucca chips and topped with pearl onion jus.

Stazione Centrale, 820 St. Clair Ave. W., 416-656-4817.

SCUTTLEBUTT

Richmond Hill's annual food festival, Tastes of the Hill, is moving outdoors and into the summer this year. Normally an October event, Tastes of the Hill 2012 will take place on Aug. 26 at Richmond Green Park. The event features live entertainment, childrens' activities and, of course, lots of food stations.

South of Temperance, the Financial District resto-bar that boasts one of the best patios in the city, has been given an eviction notice to make way for a new office tower. The restaurant will leave its current home at the end of October, but a new location is in the works.

After 51 years in business, midtown institution Senior's Steak House & Restaurant closed up shop at the end of June. A new Hero Burger location is expected to replace the long-standing restaurant.

In Kensington Market, Peter Sanagan, owner of Sanagan's Meat Locker, plans to move his artisanal butcher shop into the space formerly occupied by European Quality Meats and Sausages. It should open in early August.

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