

NATION'S Restaurant News

THE NEWSWEEKLY OF THE FOODSERVICE INDUSTRY

May 26, 2003



ON
THE MENU

CULINARY CURRENTS

Plate, Ardmore, Pa.

Cuisine: American with Mediterranean and Asian flavors
 Opened: April 2003
 Projected dinner-check average: \$30
 Seats: dining room, 175; outdoors, 70; bar area, 50 plus
 Menu maker: executive chef Tom Harkins

In style, presentation, food offerings and pricing, Plate is a sign of the times, says executive chef Tom Harkins.

With dinner offerings such as a barbecue beef brisket sandwich and sesame-crusting tuna ranging from \$9.50 to \$19.75, Plate was designed to serve stylish fare and comfort food at affordable prices.

As a result of "seeing the way the economy is and seeing what's going on in the world, we're trying to open a place that is affordable. We wanted to keep the ingredients comfortable," says Harkins, who also is the executive chef at Philadelphia's Circa restaurant.



Tom Harkins, above and his partner, David Mantelmacher, created Plate as a more casual alternative to their upscale restaurant, Circa.

Teaming up once again with restaurateur David Mantelmacher, Harkins helped create a restaurant that was more casual than their nearly 10-year-old Circa. By contrast, Plate, which opened April 28, is located in the Suburban Square shopping center in the Philadelphia suburb of Ardmore.

Plate's design and menu, however, also reflect

the affluence and sophisticated dining habits of the upscale suburban community.

"Some of the food is hip," and some of it is along the lines of barbecue baby back ribs and slow-smoked beef brisket, Harkins says.

He even placed 4-ounce filet mignon on the kids menu with sides of peas and carrots and mashed potatoes. Other offerings on the kids menu are more common, with selections such as macaroni and cheese, chicken fingers and grilled cheese. Kids also may order capellini with pomodoro sauce.

Harkins, who has worked as a chef at Restaurant 210 in Philadelphia's Rittenhouse Hotel, says he has styled Plate's menu so that it caters to a broad range of tastes in the community. It is designed to generate a check average of about \$30.

The goal is eventually to generate \$4.5 million in sales a year on 300 to 400 covers a day, Harkins says.

"It's a big operation," Harkins says. "We're looking to do a lot of volume here."

According to Harkins, owner Mantelmacher saw a gap among the restaurants in Ardmore, and he believed it could be filled by a spot such as Plate.

"He always is looking for a place to go with his kids and not really have a drink, and there are not many places out here like that," Harkins says.

Plate, whose layout features Italian furniture, mahogany wood and glass partitioned walls, also is outfitted with a wood-fired oven, which will be used to prepare pizzas, some appetizers and various fruit cobblers for dessert.

At dinner Plate offers a wide spectrum of items, such as brick-oven shellfish stew with clams, shrimp, scallops, mussels, chorizo sausage and saffron rice. Other entrées include radiatore beef Bolognese with Swiss chard and Gruyère cheese.

Lunch offerings include tuna tacos with chipotle mayonnaise, poached salmon salad and the steamed Prince Edward Island mussels with chorizo, roasted garlic, parsley, and white-wine sauce.

The desserts "have a lot of showmanship," Harkins says. One such offering includes an assortment of ice creams in house-made cones, which are served in a Plexiglas painter's palette with spaces for such toppings as chocolate sauce and sprinkles.

Plate's wine list features 20 selections priced less than \$30 and another 20 wines in the range of \$30 to \$85.

— James Peters



Lunch
SALADS

Asian Chicken Salad with smoked chicken, spicy cashews, ponzu vinaigrette \$8.75	Poached Salmon with grilled vegetables, white beans, asparagus, yogurt cucumber, lemon poppy seed vinaigrette \$11
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ENTRÉES

Chicken Pad Thai with rice noodles, egg, ground peanut and bean sprouts \$10	BBQ Beef Brisket Sandwich with smoked Gouda, coleslaw and crisp onion rings \$8.50
Tuna Tacos with avocado, lettuce, tomatoes, chipotle mayonnaise \$9	Smoked Duck Calzone with Shiitake mushrooms, goat cheese, greens and sweet onion relish

FROM THE WOOD-FIRED OVEN

Personal Pizza

Cheese \$7 Smoked Salmon & Goat Cheese \$10	Barbeque Chicken \$9 Grilled Skirt Steak & Feta Cheese \$9.50
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Dinner

ENTRÉES

BBQ Baby Back Ribs with potato salad, cole slaw and jalapeño cream cheese cornbread \$19.50	Ricotta Cavatelli with spicy sausage, tomatoes, fresh basil and spinach \$15
Sesame-Crusting Tuna with sticky rice, bok choy and mustard sauce \$19.75	Radiatore Beef Bolognese with Swiss chard and Gruyère cheese \$13.50