

Burger Beat at Maggie's Pub

Written by Mark Shaffer

Tuesday, 13 August 2013 14:40



Why Habersham hops on Wednesday nights . . .

Story and photos by Mark Shaffer

LET'S DO THE TIME WARP

Wednesday night in Habersham, the award-winning New Urban community on the banks of the Broad River, just outside of Beaufort. There is a time warp vibe to the place with its lush parks and greenways, sprawling oaks and front porches. Without the cars, the golf carts and a few modern amenities, it's easy to imagine oneself in the hometown idyll of post World War II America.

It's Burger Night at Maggie's Pub and Peggy Wilson's busy seating customers as soon as the doors open. Husband, chef and co-owner Richard marshals the kitchen for the evening rush. Everyone comes to Maggie's. In October 2009, we wrote that "a year after the Wilson's sold their much-lauded Bateaux in Port Royal, the doors have finally opened on the new digs, a

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stylish American riff on the classic British pub and the Wilson's first foray into what Richard refers to as 'flip flop casual.'" Four years on, Maggie's is the social heartbeat for residents and a culinary destination for those of us who appreciate fine, fresh, local ingredients prepared with something akin to alchemy.

During a recent email conversation, I asked the chef to boil down his culinary philosophy and how it relates to something as basic as a simple burger.

He writes: "My philosophy towards food is simple – Balance. In flavors, in texture, in p



ortions . . . in all. Primarily in fats, sugars and acids. Too much of [any of these] leaves the palate wanting. Additionally, I like to think my food is a 'mirror' which reflects my travels and the wonders of the world.

"My burgers reflect both these philosophies and ideas. Seasoned and cured overnight Mibek Farms Beef 8.5 ounce patties are grilled over 700 degree lava rocks for a great texture. Great beef should always taste like great beef. To maintain its moistness, we must create a seal, thus the charring at 700 degrees. This allows us to ensure our burgers never dry out. We finish them in our oven so they can slowly cook to the desired temp."

Along with his blend of seasonings, there's also a little extra natural fat added to lend a depth of flavor to the typically lean Mibek beef. But these are secrets. And Richard's not giving up any secrets.

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This evening's team Burger Beat roster includes Lowcountry Weekly Publisher and Editor, Jeff and Margaret Evans, our Everyday Gourmet, caterer and cookbook author, Debbi Covington, my wife Susan, and myself.

ALCHEMY & LAGNIAPPES

Because this is Richard Wilson, there will be more than burgers coming to the table.



The first is the Chef's take on Falafel, made of slow roasted chickpeas and zucchini with egg, salt and pepper, and a mysterious spice called "Grains of Paradise." The mixture is flash fried like a hushpuppy – a savory Mediterranean hushpuppy. Prior to this, if you'd asked me if I like Falafel, my response would have been bland indifference – a reflection of my experience with the dish. Not anymore.

Next comes a long platter of delicate yellow blossoms. "This is my sous chef's crazy version of crab dip," says Richard, "done in puff pastry . . . and that is a cucumber blossom."

"This is not your typical Burger Beat," observes Margaret.

At this point, I've actually almost forgotten about the burgers. I'm a crab fiend and this is brilliant. The filling is like a crab mousse, airy and light but bursting with rich, crustacean goodness. And the

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