



DINING

Local ingredients make for delicious dishes at Farm & Table

Operative words are fresh and flavorful

By ANDREA LIN
For the Journal

March was the opening month for the North Valley's Farm & Table, but early menu previews looked tantalizing and the foodie whispers grew to a dull roar by the time the doors opened. This venture by Cherie Montoya Austin and her husband, Joseph Austin, is their first, but you'd hardly know it. There seemed to be few if any opening-month stumbles in either food or service — clearly the staff were ready to go from day one.

At Farm & Table, the ingredients are local — right-out-back-in-the-garden local — and the cuisine makes the best of that produce with New Mexican accents from blue corn to green chile. Due to the give and take of gardening, the menu changes monthly to reflect the best from the backyard and other local farmers' crops. One month could serve up amazing arugula and roasted beets (as March did), but then April or May could shift to another green or a new salad entirely. You'll just have to check out the menu on their website, Facebook page or stop by in person and dive right in.

Get your feet wet by swinging on over for a



DEAN HANSON/JOURNAL

Farm & Table is a new high-end dining location in the North Valley.

weekend brunch, where blue corn atole (\$7) is served up steaming in a bowl like pale purple cream of wheat, garnished with cream, nuts and dried fruit. Give it at least a go, but be warned that the taste is a bit bland until all those toppings are stirred in. Other breakfast options start with a not-so-standard egg plate (\$8.50) with chorizo made on site, potatoes and toast with jam from a Heidi's

Organic raspberry farm.

Savory brunch fans must leap on the mandatory green chile cheeseburger (\$11), done to the perfect medium rare upon request, juices pink and perfect from the grass-fed beef. Even the oozing cheddar is from Tucumcari, gluing burger to cornmeal bun. The burger meal is filling both from the fantastic patty but also from fries that are some of the best

in town — crisp yet fluffy inside.

At dinner the menu gets an air of seriousness from chef Ka'ainoa Ravey but maintains the "modern eclectic" theme with cauliflower "couscous" and pork belly with butterscotch miso sauce (it sounds far weirder than it tastes). Some plates seem on the small side for the prices, but others are portioned just right: no

Farm & Table

★★★★

LOCATION: 8917 Fourth NW, 503-7124, www.farmandtablenm.com

HOURS: Dinner 5-9 p.m. Wednesdays-Thursdays and 5-10 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays; brunch 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturdays-Sundays

BEER AND WINE

leftovers, just good eats.

I recommend the Plate-sized Cheese Ravioli (\$13), just like it sounds, with a sauté of mushrooms, spinach and green chile sausage from Albuquerque's Joe S. Sausage. One menu variation allows you to sample that sausage in the Herbed Potato Gnocchi plate (\$13), a tumble of vibrant colors and tender dumplings.

Desserts don't get more memorable than the house Pastel Impossible (\$6), a red-chile-chocolate cake with vanilla-bean flan. It's a send-off of the old "impossible" desserts that start out as normal-looking cake batter then separate into layers while in the oven. This creation ends up with a layer of cake, a layer of flan and delicious throughout.

Nibbles

Know a great lunch spot?

Let us know about it and we'll share your find. Send 250 words or less telling us what you like about your place.

Email rkimball@abqjournal.com, fax Venue editor Rene Kimball at 823-3998 or write to P.O. Drawer J, Albuquerque, NM 87103.

Nicky V's Neighborhood Pizzeria & Patio

LOCATION: 9780 Coors NW, Suite A (north of Paseo del Norte at Westside), 890-9463

HOURS: 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Sundays-Thursdays, 11 a.m.-10 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays

My colleague Rick and I had lunch here. I am grateful to him for sharing his sandwich. That's because his meatball sandwich on French bread (\$8.50) was much more flavorful than the Italian Roast Beef on panini (\$9.50) that I ordered.

Each of us had half of the other's

sandwich.

The beef on my sandwich was not as tender nor as plentiful as it could have been. However, it did benefit from the flavors of melted provolone, roasted red peppers and caramelized onions.

The large green salad came with

a few small cubes of mozzarella and a few roma tomatoes, and was served as an appetizer. It was covered with balsamic vinaigrette and was delicious. Rick had the same opinion about his green salad.

— David Steinberg