

Save up – and save your appetite – for Bonefish Grill

New seafood restaurant offers entries that ‘melt in your mouth’

BY PAT FERRIER

PatFerrier@coloradoan.com

JOHNSTOWN — A metal mural on the wall of Bonefish Grill tells the story of a founder's dream of one day fishing in the Rocky Mountains.

While founders Tim Curci and Chris Parker of St. Petersburg, Fla., may never have fished the Poudre or Big Thompson rivers, the latest entrée into Northern Colorado's crowded culinary field is a big catch for the region.

If you haven't heard about or experienced Bonefish Grill yet — open since Aug. 13 — grab your favorite person and go.

The place is remarkable: wonderful food, elegantly casual ambiance and attentive wait staff. It quickly should catch on as one of the area's most desirable dining establishments.

Nestled in the 2534 development across U.S. Highway 34 from The Promenade Shops at Centerra, Bonefish Grill offers fresh seafood — “from the ocean to the table in three days” — including Icelandic Arctic Charr, Alaskan halibut, Chilean Sea bass, rainbow trout, Atlantic salmon and cold water lobster tails, all cooked over an oak wood-burning grill and served with your choice of lemon butter sauce, warm mango salsa, virgin Mediterranean sauce or Pan Asian style.

Its signature Bang-Bang shrimp starts the meal off with a bang, providing just enough kick to make you sad when you hit the bed of lettuce on which it is served.

Among nine appetizers, there's only one non-seafood offering, a Cajun chicken egg roll, a tiny deterrent for nonseafood eaters.

Starting your main course with the Bonefish House Salad of chopped greens, tomatoes, Kalamata olives, Brazilian organic heart of palm and roasted pine nuts, and tossed with a slightly sweet citrus herb vinaigrette, sets high dining expectations for what's to follow.

The rest of the meal doesn't disappoint.

The Maryland-style crab cakes are a nice surprise lacking the sometimes heavy breading often seen in the dish.

These cakes, broiled lightly, are served with sirachi and wasabi sauces. The blood red curachi sauce arranged in a heart on top of the wasabi, makes a delightful contrast to the bright green wasabi.

While specializing in fish and seafood, the nonseafood offerings don't play second fiddle to the main feature, as they often do at other seafood restaurants.

Prepared perfectly and served with garlic gorgonzola butter on the side, the filet mignon melts in your mouth.

Sides of your choice of potato — sorry, no fries — pasta, rice or steamed veggies, are done perfectly. Served with corn prepared daily off the cob is as fresh as the summer.

Desserts are limited: crème brulee, key lime pie and our personal favorite, a macadamia nut brownie, a flourless recipe served with raspberry sauce, vanilla ice cream and fresh whipped cream.

While Bonefish is a national chain with restaurants in 29 states, including three in Colorado, it belies the “ate at one, ate at them all” atmosphere of other chains. Dark wood, highly polished floors and crisp white tablecloths set an elegant tone. Yet, customers come in all kinds of dress, from shorts to suits. The metal mural in each restaurant tells a different story,



Sherri Barber/The Coloradoan

Ahi Tuna Sashimi is on the appetizer menu at Bonefish Grill in Loveland. Tuna is sesame seared, sliced thin and served with wasabi and pickled ginger.

according to the wait staff.

Proprietor Ed Carroll appears to have thought of everything including curbside drop off on a recent rainy night with waiters dressed in yellow Bonefish Grill slickers and umbrellas so guests wouldn't get wet. Children get blue glow sticks to keep them occupied . . . it was enough to make some adults jealous.

Service is attentive, although the wait staff still is coming up to speed on the menu. On this night, a server in training struggled to recall the specials, ask how a customer would like her steak cooked and forgot a drink order. But given the restaurant had been only open two days, and given the quality of the rest of the experience, one can give the staff a pass. They will get faster and better with time.

Prices, while in line with the quality of food and ample portions, are still a bit on the high side for many people's budgets. A meal for two of a shared appetizer, corn chowder with crab lump, house salad, two drinks each, filet mignon, crab cakes and dessert: \$86. It's well worth skipping somewhere else in the budget to enjoy a relaxing night out with fabulous food and friendly service.

Bonefish Grill

Address: 4920 Thompson Parkway, Johnstown **Phone:** 663-3474

Hours: 4 to 10:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 4 to 11:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 4 to 10 p.m. Sunday.

Prices: Entrees, \$13-\$27; soup and salad, \$4.90-\$9.90; appetizers, \$5.90-\$16.40; desserts, \$4.90-\$5.50

Parking: ample **Bar:** Full bar **Kids:** Kids menus available; all kids dinners \$4.99

Most current health inspection: Not available **Directions:** From Fort Collins, take Interstate 25 south to the U.S. Highway 34 interchange, get off at the Greeley exit, about two blocks, turn right onto Thompson Parkway.