

New downtown restaurant is a tiny gourmet treasure

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Batavia

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I, like many in our fair town, have bridge fear.

Last week, I had to go downtown to Panera Bread on Wilson Street for a meeting. Rather than deal with traffic, I parked on Water Street between First and Main streets.

I was quite surprised to see very little traffic on Wilson and the parking lot in front of Panera almost empty. When I left Panera, 50 percent of it's business walked out the door. The other woman stayed for lunch.

On my way back to my car, I passed the location where Jail House Pizza used to be and noticed that a new restaurant, Enticing Cuisine, was opening there on Feb. 23.

I remember thinking, "This guy better have one big family and a lot of friends to support him through this time of detours and alternate routes. Why open at such a difficult time? I decided to call him and ask.

The chef at Enticing Cuisine is Jason Stoffels. Chef Jason is a 1990 graduate of Batavia High School and of Kendall College's Culinary School. He recently was the head chef at Riverside Receptions in Geneva.

His resume reads like a culinary safari with a variety of restaurant chef positions from Washington to New Jersey. His first job was at McDonald's, and he has done everything from flipping burgers to being a personal chef on Chicago's North Shore.

So he has the credentials, but why open now?

"The space became available and I just felt that the time was right," he said.

As if he doesn't have enough on his plate (pardon the pun) his wife, Diocelina, gave birth to their first child about a month ago.

I'm a sucker for babies, so I made a reservation at this fixed-price gourmet restaurant. I was pleasantly surprised by the fare that Chef Jason offers. He has three entrees on the menu: filet au poivre, seared chicken breast in a butter sauce with sun-dried tomatoes and artichokes, and seared scallops.

I ordered the filet and almost choked to death because I forgot about the green peppercorns, much to my husband's amusement. Once I rationed those little suckers by the bitiful, I found that I had the best filet I had ever had, done to perfection.

The same went for the pork egg rolls that came to me looking almost too pretty to eat. I chose the shrimp bisque over the cream of mushroom soup, salad or crab cakes. For dessert, I had a flan that had a hint of Bailey's Irish cream with a peach accompaniment.

You may bring your own wine. There isn't a corkage fee.

The menu will change every six weeks.

I tell you this not to share with you how gluttonous I am but to give you the range of offerings, which cost from \$31.95 to \$39.95.

Batavia doesn't have another restaurant like this and it would be a shame to see it close because of

limited traffic due to bridge construction.

After dinner, Stoffels came and thanked us for coming. He told me that his mom also grew up in Batavia. When he mentioned her name, Barbara Peterson, I said "From Walnut Street? Three doors up from Abhalters? We went to the same playground." I guess I have now come to the age where I connect to people by their playgrounds and their proximity to neighborhood groceries.

It would be a shame to see any of our downtown businesses suffer because we are worried about a little extra traffic. These are the people who have served us faithfully on a regular basis. Isn't it right to extend them the same courtesy when this bridge project is going on?

There are multiple parking lots to serve our downtown area and many businesses have back-door access. If you have work for Reel Pro, Dick LaVoy is setting up a drop-off near the old Swanson's Hardware building just east of Kathy's Diner. Craig Foltos is offering wheelbarrow pickups to those who can't make the half-block walk to the barber shop. I trust Craig with a scissors, but I am not sure I would ever trust him to wheel me around in a wheelbarrow.

When you're out and about downtown take the time to stop at the MainStreet office, 2 E. Wilson. It's a great vantage point of the bridge construction and you'll be able to see how many parking spaces are open and how many businesses need your support.

Enticing Cuisine is at 12 S. Water St., and is open Friday and Saturday only. Reservations are recommended; call (630) 761-0399. During the week, he offers catering. For more information, log on to www.enticingcuisine.com king60510@aol.com