



Dining **With Dan** | Story and Photos by Daniel M. Walker, Contributing Columnist

GOLDEN LEAF BISTRO

Growing up in the South has given me many enduring and pleasant memories. One is of my dad taking me to a tobacco warehouse for the annual tobacco auction. The air was filled with the aroma of dried tobacco leaves and the rhythmic chant of auctioneers offering the golden-leaf bounty.



I recently had a new tobacco warehouse experience in Danville, Virginia, by having dinner at the Golden Leaf Bistro, which is located in a real tobacco warehouse built around 1906.

“The original name for the building was Golden Leaf and we felt it was a natural to name the restaurant, Golden Leaf Bistro,” says Taylor Alvis, the restaurant’s general manager and part owner. Taylor and his business partner, William Gentry, in 2013 transformed the old structure into the current restaurant, which can seat 147 diners inside. Outside is a patio and bar arrangement, which allows for seating of 60 more guests.

I was impressed with how Taylor and William use local art and artifacts to capture the history of Danville and local culture. For example, the middle of the restaurant is designed with soundproof booths to simulate an old trolley car that used to operate in downtown Danville. “Our goal is for our diners to capture and enjoy the Golden Leaf Bistro experience, which will set us apart from other fine dining alternatives,” Taylor continues.

So what is the Golden Leaf Bistro experience? My interpretation would be ambiance, service, attention to details and, of course, taste and quality of food. Our server, Kyla, was outstanding. She went out of her way to make sure we had a pleasant experience.

Also, she really knew the menu! She was well-versed in details of the different entrees, which was a great help in selecting the right dish from the many menu choices. Kyla also indicated that Golden Leaf has different menus to enhance each season of the year.

Taylor Alvis, general manager and part owner, welcoming patrons to the Golden Leaf Bistro.



Our server, Kyla, with desserts.



We began our gourmet adventure by sharing the fried green tomatoes appetizer; it was topped with homemade pimento and Parmesan cheese, and finished with a tangy balsamic glaze. The homemade pimento cheese was some of the best we had ever tasted and was made without mayonnaise. Other appetizers that looked interesting were the oysters Rockefeller, Cajun-seared ahi tuna and Saganaki, which is described as kasseri cheese flambéed tableside in Wild Turkey bourbon ... maybe next time. I did try the Gentry salad (named for William), which was the traditional iceberg wedge covered with blue cheese crumbles, bacon, onions, pecans and blue cheese dressing, but also cranberries, that proved to be a nice addition to this salad.

Our table selected entrees of grilled double-cut bone-in pork chop covered with a bacon tomato jam; oven-roasted crab cakes over Cajun corn cream sauce; and, finally, I ordered bacon-wrapped scallops. The scallops were lounging on jalapeno polenta cakes with a Cajun cream sauce. And you guessed it — to uphold my duties as a “gourmand” food writer, I tried each dish and loved them all — so much for selecting a favorite!

My palate found a lovely flavor in the tender pork chop and both sauces for the crab cakes and scallops had just a hint of “kick,” as my friend Emeril Lagasse would say. Other entrees that will hold an interest for my next visit were the blackened mahi-mahi with Parmesan risotto and/or the filet mignon with a demi-glaze sauce. I overheard another patron talk about how good the steaks were and I will remember that on my return visit.

Desserts selected by the table were peach cobbler and chocolate bourbon-pecan pie, all a la mode. There were about five other luscious choices, but after such a filling meal, I’m sure some guests decide to enjoy dessert entertainment on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights in the summer months on the patio.

The more I visit, analyze and write about restaurants, the more I realize the differences between a really good restaurant and a so-so restaurant has to be the attention to details. In my opinion, the Golden Leaf Bistro is a good example of a restaurant that believes details are important. A few of these that enhanced my visit were a descriptive menu, restaurant appointments, attention of staff, locally baked breads and desserts, clean restrooms and a first ... our server had calling cards! Just the place you may want to consider for a special event this holiday season.

Excellent job, Golden Leaf Bistro!!

Be of good cheer and let me know a special place you have found at dwalker123@comcast.net. ■



From top to bottom:

1. Fried green tomatoes with homemade pimento and Parmesan cheese spread.
2. The Gentry salad.
3. Double-cut bone-in pork chop with tomato jam.
4. Maryland-style crab cake with Cajun corn cream sauce.
5. Bacon-wrapped scallops with Cajun cream sauce.
6. Chocolate bourbon-pecan pie.



One of the dining rooms showcasing local art and artifacts to capture the history of Danville and local culture.



Trolley dining area, one of four dining rooms.



GOLDEN LEAF BISTRO
 215 Craghead Street
 Danville, VA 24541
 (434) 791-3191
www.goldenleafbistro.com

Hours of operation:
 Monday – Thursday 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.
 Friday – Saturday 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.
 Sunday 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.