



# Mama Max's: It's Slap Your Momma Good!



Photos by Bret Curry

**Here's all you really need to know about Mama Max's Home Cookin' in Prescott: "Mama ain't happy unless you are happy."**

That is the mantra from the namesake herself, Maxine "Mama Max" Milner, who has been cooking some of the best soul food and Southern specialties for the past 20 years at the restaurant off Main Street.

We recently made the drive down Interstate 30 to the town of Prescott, county seat of Nevada County. We were greeted by Jackie Milner, daughter of Mama Max and one of the nicest folks we have met on our tour across the state.

"We make everything from scratch – everything," Jackie said, proudly. She then issued a very special invitation. "Come on back to the kitchen; Mama wants to meet you."

Upon entering the bustling kitchen, I met Mama Max, who was sitting in front of a bushel of turnip greens, separating the spine from the leaves.

"I put a little of Mama's love in every dish," she said, beaming. "Order anything you like, but save room for dessert."



Doug with owner Maxine "Mama Max" Milner

We returned to our table and perused the huge menu with its vast array of choices. It was actually daunting, only because we didn't want to miss anything. Enter Jackie, who patiently walked us through the menu and made suggestions.

Then commenced the literal feast. The Mama Max Special Bacon Burger was a great start, grilled perfectly and served with the perfect complement of fresh vegetables and plenty of bacon. The fried catfish was fantastic, as was the chicken and dumplings.

The BBQ ribs, along with the sliced beef barbecue, were as good as most restaurants that specialize in "cue," and we plan to return to Mama's to concentrate on her barbecue, which was tasty.

Jackie assured us the best was yet to come. "People come from all over to try our fried chicken," and after one bite it was easy to see that this was no exaggeration. (As I write this column, I am literally trying to figure out a way to regularly visit Mama's on my lunch hour just so I can have more of her chicken and sides. I need a helicopter pilot's license...)

The fried chicken is made upon order, and diners are asked to wait 30 minutes. But time seems inconsequential at Mama Max's when one partakes of her cooking. Along with the perfectly seasoned, crunchy fried chicken came the veggies and side dishes. Mama uses only the freshest vegetables – never are they frozen or canned. The menu features a dozen different vegetables and more than 15 different side dishes. We did our best to try them all.

The turnip greens, with just a hint of bacon, were delicious, as were the purple hull peas, fried okra, and macaroni and cheese. But the all-star by far was the creamed corn. Mama takes freshly grilled whole ears of corn, strips them and mixes the kernels in cream, butter and spices. Delectable!

Midway through our meal, I was again summoned to the kitchen. There was Mama Max, still stripping greens. She looked up, smiled and asked me if I liked her cooking. I told her it was a meal worthy of a king and that I was having the time of my life.

"My cookin' is so good it will make you slap your momma," Mama declared with a hearty laugh. She then introduced me to some of her family members who assist in the day-to-day operations of running a restaurant.

I soon learned that Mama Max's is all about family. In fact, there are three generations who help serve some of the state's best country vittles – each dish infused with some of Mama's love.





**Jackie Milner, daughter of Mama Maxine**

Other meal choices (entrée with two sides, reasonably priced) include: meat loaf, grilled pork chops, chicken fried steak, smoked chicken, chicken strips, hot links and even a T-bone steak.

The sign out



front says, "Home of World Famous Chocolate Turtles and Homemade Pies," so naturally we had to try a bit of both. Wow. The chocolate turtles do indeed deserve world acclaim. Each turtle is made daily, with plenty of nuts and caramel inside the creamy chocolate. The treats are formed into the shape of turtles! They fulfill mail order requests daily.

We forged ahead and sampled the pies. Among the homemade plates of love (including the crust!) are cheesecake, chocolate cream pie, cherry pie and my favorite, apple pie. We ordered extra slices for our compatriots back in Little Rock, and they proclaimed them to be among the best desserts they've ever tasted.

I made one last trip to the kitchen, and there was Mama Max, still dutifully picking greens and still with a smile on her face.

She knew I was sated, and I knew she was happy knowing that fact. It was a neat moment and one I hope to repeat very soon. •

## Mama Max's Diner

1102 W. Main Street

Prescott, AR 71857

(870) 887-5005

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Closed Monday and Tuesday

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