

Briar Rose is the Place for Homemade Goodness

by ROB ROEDEL



The owners of the Briar Rose Bakery and Deli in Farmington “take the time to do it right,” and the results are evident by the wonderful fare and a tastefully decorated building.

Examples of “taking the time to do it right” included a search for the perfect butter to use in Briar Rose’s pastries and a search for the best types of cinnamon to use in their cinnamon rolls.

“We searched for the right type of butter for our pastries and found a European-type butter,” said Brad Brekelbaum, the restaurant’s general manager. “We are the only place in this area that uses it.”



The Briar Rose, which opened in April 2011, is the result of a plan by Brad’s father-in-law, Larry Bowden, who envisioned a bakery on Main Street in this charming northwest Arkansas town. Larry and his wife, Diane, and son, Brett, work at the restaurant along with Brad’s wife, Nicole.

“We have great control over our product,” Brad said. “We not only make our own bread, we smoke our own meats and prepare the side dishes and condiments ourselves.”

On a recent visit, my lunch companions and I were treated to a great spread of sandwiches and side dishes, as well as desserts and a latte. The sandwiches included a tasty lemon chicken salad on a freshly baked croissant served with a sweet and fresh fruit salad.

Next, we were served an attractive bowl of southwest chicken soup, which was hearty and filling. The soup featured smoked chicken, corn and black beans and was covered with shredded cheese.

The turkey and bacon sandwich was an absolute treat. The flavors of the smoked turkey and bacon were a perfect combination and enhanced with a seasoned mayonnaise, avocado and caramelized onions served on a ciabatta roll.

The next offering was the spicy Italian sandwich, which featured smoked ham, salami, pepperoni, cheddar and pepper-jack cheese, and lettuce with a unique spicy tomato-pepperoncini spread on a picture-perfect ciabatta roll.

We dove into the Briar Rose chopped salad and found it to be as good as it looked. This crisp gem included tomato, red onion, mushrooms, olive tapenade, egg, raisins and croutons with lemon basil dressing and was topped with crumbled bacon and feta cheese. It was a salad lover’s dream!

The next sandwich, the Tri-Tip Dip, was my personal favorite. This one has layers of hand-cut, sliced sirloin with melted provolone cheese on a freshly baked French baguette served with an au jus dipping sauce.

“Tri-tip is a cut of sirloin which is very popular in California, and a large percentage of the cut of meat is shipped to the west coast,” Brad said. “It is one of our most popular sandwiches. We found suppliers to allow us to offer it here and began pushing it.”

Each delicious sandwich is served with kettle chips and a pickle.

For dessert, we were presented

with four options from The Briar Rose’s impressive list.

The first sample was a strawberry cake. This stunning treat begins with a layer of strawberry cake (made with fresh strawberries), a layer of homemade strawberry jam, a layer of cheesecake, another layer of jam, another layer of cake and covered with a sweet cream cheese icing. The result of this combination is beyond words and one of the best desserts I have tasted in years.

Another cake was appropriately named Death by Chocolate. Some would say that this chocolate fudge-filled cake featuring a dark chocolate ganache is to die for, and I would have to agree.

Each slice of cake is equal to about one-eighth of the cake, Brad said.

The third dessert was short crusts, or tarts. These bite-sized treats have a round homemade crust filled with Bavarian cream and topped with fresh fruits. My colleagues and I loved the mixture of the crust, cream and fruits. Sweet and oh so good!

We saved the renowned cinnamon roll for last. Brad, who provided great levels of detail on the operation of The Briar Rose, explained that different types of cinnamon have different oil content and change the flavor of the cream-covered rolls. One of the cinnamons used is the most expensive type on the market, he said. The taste was perfect to us!

The Briar Rose offers a unique coffee buffet for patrons. Customers can buy a large cup of coffee made with gourmet beans and flavor it with a choice of flavors at a homemade whipped cream bar. The flavors offered vary throughout the week.

The attention to detail doesn’t stop with the food at this Farmington establishment. The exterior of the building features a whimsical design that is as warm and welcoming as the food is delicious. The interior

features hand-painted murals, and each tabletop is a wooden canvas





for additional murals. There are two wooden doors for entering the dining area. One is for adults, and one is for children.

“We knew the building was going to be important and definitely needed something that you could resonate with and bring back childhood memories,” he said.

Because the family also operates Damons BBQ and Grill (hence the wonderful smoked meat and poultry for the sandwiches), they offer barbeque each Friday. Brad said the demand for the once-a-week smoked meat items is very high. The barbeque business preceded the bakery and deli and also has a loyal following.

And, just to add to dining options, The Briar Rose added a wood-fired pizza oven and offers artisan-style-crust pizzas on Saturday evenings.

Brad said that running a bakery and deli is “not for the faint of heart,” as the family works in shifts and puts in a total of 20 hours per day.

“We knew what we liked, and the result is the food we offer,” he said. The menu states, “Homemade Artisan and Pan Breads. Made here. Baked here. Enjoyed everywhere.” I would change the last part to LOVED everywhere.

The Briar Rose team “takes the time to do it right,” and the residents of Northwest Arkansas are very thankful they do. •

The Briar Rose Bakery and Deli

28 Main St.
Farmington
(479) 300-6027
www.nwacottage.com

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