



WHAT'S
COOKIN'

1866 Restaurant

Chef Fessler shares his love of cooking with all who dine

By Carol Ann Gregg
Mercer County Business Chronicle

Do your tastes lean toward Caribbean, Cajun or Southwestern cuisine? Ed Fessler, chef and owner of 1866 Restaurant and Taproom,

1866 Restaurant & Taproom

8399 Sharon-Mercer Road
Mercer

724-662-1187

866-389-1866, toll free

Open 4 to 10 p.m. Tuesday-
Thursday; 4 to 11 Friday; 4 to
11:30 Saturday; and noon to
8:30 p.m. Sunday.

probably has something on the menu to touch your palette.

In early 2003, Fessler and his wife Marjorie resurrected the dining venue where The Timbers restaurant had been outside Mercer. The building – a former barn – had been sitting idle for about three years when they bought the site to fulfill Fessler's dream of being a chef in his own restaurant.

Fessler studied and worked at the side of two major chefs in Philadelphia. He also spent time with Marriott Food Service. He had been away from the industry for a while but continued to hone his skills at home, cooking for parties and family events.

Fessler loves to experiment with herbs and spices and has a touch for



The restaurant seats about 70 in the main dining area, about 20 at the bar and booths and an additional 50 seats in an adjoining room. The loft can accommodate 250 people.

David E. Dale
/Business Chronicle

pairing flavors to acquire unique flavors.

While renovating the restaurant, Marjorie found 1866 carved into a beam in the upper levels of former barn. After doing some research, they believe the original barn was built in 1866, hence the name.

The menu at 1866 Restaurant reflects an emphasis on steak and seafood. Each dinner is cooked to order with skill and care. The items that can be prepared more quickly are indicated on the menu. Patrons in a hurry should indicate that to their server so they can get their meal more quickly.

Our party of four spent a snowy Saturday evening enjoying the culinary work of Chef Fessler. As we entered the restaurant, we noted that four entrées were being featured. One of our party ordered the 10-ounce strip steak from the extensive regular menu while the rest of our party went for featured items that were not on the regular menu. One had the rack of lamb, one the six-ounce fillet wrapped in back on and the other had the scallops au gratin.

There was a choice of soup or salad. The salads were fresh with an olive, hot pepper, onions and tomato over a bed of assorted greens and choice of several dressings. There are several home-made soup choices. We tried the 1866 Arizona Roasted Corn Chowder. This is one of the chef's personal recipes. The delicious chowder is made up of a thick, creamy sauce with mini-cubed potatoes and roasted corn with delicious flavorings, but not hot.

We also had our choice of baked potatoes, twice-baked potatoes, noodles, rice or mashed red-skinned potatoes. The

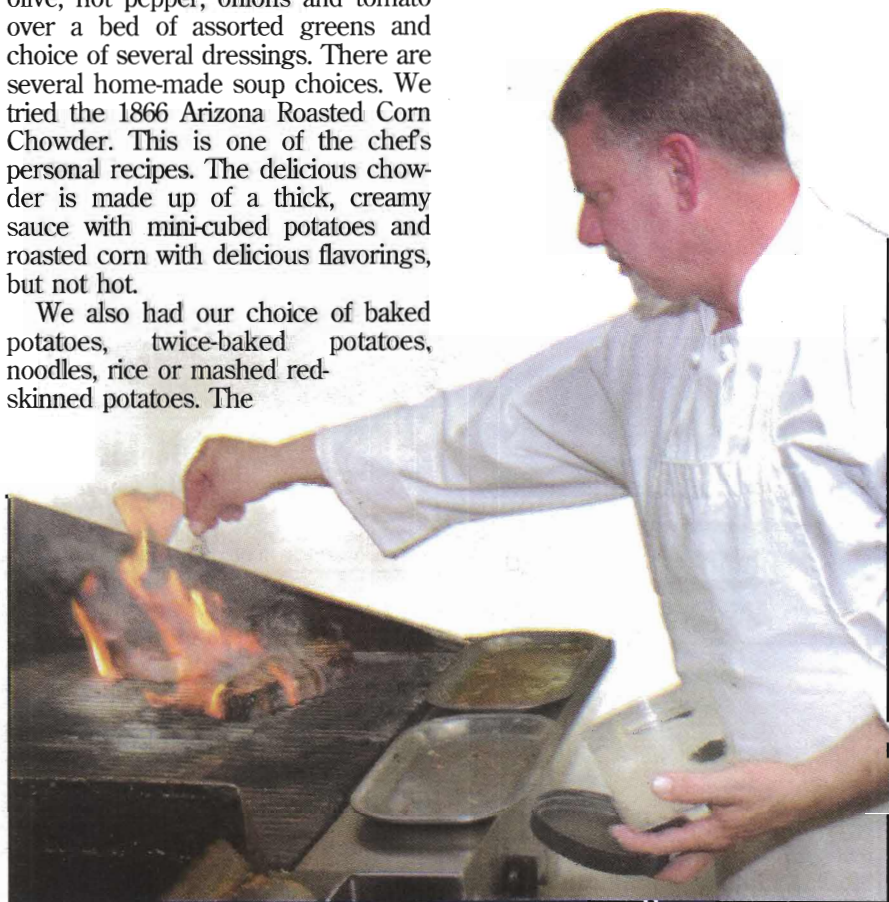
twice-baked were heaped with a cheesy, mashed, baked potato mixture.

We enjoyed bantering with the wait staff and spent a leisurely evening in front of the gas-log fire in the fireplace. There was pleasant music in the background that added to the comfortable setting. We were neither rushed or made to feel that we had to wait too long for any course.

The prices are comparable to mid-to high-end restaurants. The atmosphere is very conducive to quiet conversation or a small celebration. We plan to return and try something else from this skilled chef.

Fessler encourages guests to indicate any diet, food restrictions or preferences to their server. He enjoys providing people with just what they would like. He developed a senior menu after several patrons indicated that a regular serving was too much food.

The restaurant seats about 70 in the main dining area, about 20 in the taproom at the bar and booths and an additional 50 seats in an adjoining room. The loft can accommodate a wedding, banquet or business event for about 250 people. ♦



David E. Dale/Herald

Chef/owner Ed Fessler sprinkles herbs onto a piece of flaming meat.