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SOUTHERN COLORADO SUSTAINABILITY CONFERENCE

November 3-4, 2009

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Restaurant Review - Songbird Cafe & Music Hall

By: Tisha Casida

Twenty-four miles and about 20 minutes away, Beulah welcomes hungry guests with a fabulous, casual fine-dining experience at The Songbird Café. Invited by Rod White, the owner and a long-time friend and supporter of That's Natural!, a good friend and fellow publisher and I made our way due west on a Saturday, to try out this new family-owned and operated café.

Within the wide array of home-made items, it is easy for a food-junkie like me to pick up on the attention to detail and the menu selections that would appeal to any pallet – vegetarians (and even vegans) included. My friend and company for the day is a carnivore, and found multiple items that would satisfy his hunger – his selection for lunch – Grilled Ham & Cheese, Tomato-Basil Soup, Potato Salad, and a Coca-Cola. I, an omnivore, had a Greek Salad with Wild Salmon and a glass of their Cabernet Sauvignon.

As our extremely friendly waitress, Jesse, brought us the dishes, I was pleasantly surprised at the perfectly garnished dishes, and the first bite was a refreshing reminder that we have the opportunity to enjoy fine foods from some of the best chefs around, right here in Southern Colorado.

Keegan, Songbird's experienced executive chef and son of the owner, has been cooking for over 15 years. He is very familiar working with natural foods, including tempeh and tofu, and is a native Coloradan (Beulah-an at that). His fine dining experience comes from working in Oregon at several locales, and he was kind enough to come out and talk to us about the dishes we had ordered.

Each bite of my salad had yummy feta cheese and Kalamata olives, and the grilled salmon was decadent, its flavor perfectly accented by the lemon and lime juice from the wedges that garnished this beautiful dish. The grilled ham and cheese had a crunchy (but not too crunchy) buttery sourdough crust, with thick pieces of Pitt Ham, and Tillamook cheddar cheese. My friend (a cross-country traveler and frequenter of restaurants nearly every day) noted the freshness of the potato salad, which had obviously just been made and had high-quality ingredients that would command

that kind of attention. And dessert? A whole tray of selections came out, and we settled on the Apple Pie. The thick, buttery, melt-in-your-mouth crust was out of this world. Perfect.

We headed out to the Beulah Mountain Park to hike the Devil's Drool Trail. After enjoying several hours of quality-nature time and not falling once, despite my proclivity for falling (or walk for that matter), we headed back to The Songbird Café for dinner. Once again, we were greeted by Autumn, our waitress, and Kesh, the daughter of the owner. Customer-service is something that I not only adore in small businesses, it is something I have studied for over eight years. You will not be let down at this café, folks. These men and women are some of the nicest people with whom you could hope to enjoy your time eating and drinking libations.

The carnivore's selection for the evening was the Buffalo Meatloaf and Mashed Potatoes. I had the Fettuccini with Alfredo Sauce and Portabello Mushroom (their choices also included adding wild salmon, soy tempeh, or chicken breast). And when the piping hot food came out, we were once again delighted to see a beautiful presentation with generous portion sizes – enough for me to take part of my fettuccini home for a midnight snack. And dessert? This time we had a homemade brownie, adorned with cherries and homemade whip cream, followed by organic Solar Roast Solaris-Blend coffee for my friend, and a pint of Mirror Pond Pale Ale for myself. It was the perfect end to a perfect day.

To conclude my weekend of fine-dining experiences, I returned Sunday with my parents to try out the café's brunch. Fresh, hot, and well-balanced, the buffet-style brunch in the Music-Hall was extremely relaxed. Rod's wife, Shaye Donohue, created the Music-Hall-concept. I enjoyed two plates full of fresh fruit, grits, warm corn-bread and biscuits and gravy, seasoned potatoes, pancakes, crisp bacon, sausage, and a fabulous concoction of sautéed seasoned vegetables, rice, noodles, and spicy sausage. There was also a vegan rendition of this mixture of vegetables, available

to those wishing to skip the meat. My Dad, who could be called a peanut-ovore (that has to be his main food supply) actually ate two plates of most everything on the menu. My Mom fell in love with the vegetable and sausage medley that was also my favorite dish of the morning.

The Songbird Café will soon be hosting various musical events: blues bands, western swing, various concerts, including classical music (Veronica String Quartet), Dixieland jazz ("Changing Times Jazz Band" - Springs) and other groups. So stay tuned... A perfect day trip, Beulah houses some of the most beautiful surroundings in Colorado.

The Songbird Café has a variety of menu choices, simple yet cooked with perfection, so that you can taste every flavor. The people, both the customers and the folks working here, are kind, courteous and obviously caring. You are minutes away from nature, and can enjoy delicious food at the Café, just around from the General Store in Beulah. A live entertainment lineup is available, and you can view updates to this and the menu at: www.songbird-cafe.com. This restaurant is officially That's Natural! tested and approved, and we thank you for playing host to our weekend culinary adventure!

The Songbird Café

8881 Grand Ave. Beulah, CO 81023

(Center of the Village)

LUNCH: Friday (11-3), Saturday (11-4:30) DINNER

Wed., Thur., Fri. Sat. (5-8pm) SUNDAY BRUNCH

BUFFET (9am-2pm)

Contact: songbird@gmail.com



“Sustainability - Empowering the Future”

By Alicia Archibald, Event Coordinator
Systems, and Water Conservation efforts.

The Southern Colorado Sustainable Communities (SCSC) Technology Conference and Expo was held July 31-August 1, 2009, at the Pueblo Convention Center in Pueblo, Colorado. This first annual event, hosted by Action 22 Foundation, was a success with 150 attendees, 30 exhibitors of sustainable technologies, 8 education-filled concurrent sessions and plenary speakers that encouraged us to consider environmental, economic and social benefits of all that we do.

Educational sessions focused on areas such as “Sustainable Solid Waste Management” which discussed innovative solutions for developing reuse markets for discarded materials. Attendees participated in discussions addressing the current state of recyclable materials flow in Colorado. They heard from local businesses about end uses closer to the recyclable materials being generated. Roundtable discussion of potential niche markets included a variety of small-market speakers. Other topics included Funding Opportunities for Renewable Energy, Sustainable Business Strategies, Sustainable Smart Growth, Energy Efficiency in the Home, Sustainable Food

The conference was abundant with local leadership which included Pueblo County Commissioner John B. Cordova Sr., an inspiring video presentation by US Senator Mark Udall, Pueblo City Councilmen Ray Aguilera and Randy Thurston, State Senator Abel Tapia and a representative for US Senator Michael Bennet. These folks shared their thoughts about the focus of the conference – Empowering the Future. Mayor of Manitou Springs, Eric Drummond, gave an illustrative presentation of what a sustainable small town looks like from Manitou's perspective. Other local community strategies presented included the San Luis Valley, Lamar and Buena Vista.

Exhibitors in the expo demonstrated and explained their technologies to each attendee in order to educate and encourage the use of the sustainable products and services. These exhibits were complementary to all of the education sessions as well as each other, providing great collaboration opportunities between both vendors and attendees.

The Pueblo Convention Center did their homework as well. They provided organic foods (the most intriguing were the yellow carrots!), provided recycling bins throughout the facility, practiced many energy conservation strategies and provided some of the best customer service around – creating economic sustainability.

Lastly, Doug Fine, author of Farewell, My Subaru, graded us with much anticipated humor and encouragement that will help us remember that all success starts with the initial good idea, followed by tenacity to endure the trials and tribulations along the implementation way (And it helps to read the manual before you begin!). Thank you to everyone who participated and/or attended at every level - without you all it would not have been a success. For information on how to host your own zero waste, sustainability conference, contact Alicia Archibald, BETTR Recycling, at Alicia.archibald@gmail.com or 719-322-6279.