

A CONVERSATION WITH

Nancy Fitch, The Pomegranate

Nancy Fitch is opening a new restaurant, The Pomegranate, at Artisans Alley, 555 Bitters Road. Her background includes stints at Rio Rio, Zuni Grill, Restaurant Biga and, then, five years at Rosario's. Fitch opened the Peach Café in Boerne in 2003; that restaurant will remain open and she'll divide her time between the two.

When are you opening? The last weekend in September.

Is this a new space? It's a brand new space. Carolyn Coyne (owner of Artisans Alley) gutted the space. We sort of moved onto the other side of the hallway (from the Apple Annie's location). We picked out paint colors, flooring, chandeliers. Then, I got to design my dream kitchen.

What made it your dream kitchen?

Mostly the way I designed it to flow perfect for me. There's an



COURTESY PHOTO

area to do pastries and desserts, plenty of space to put all my plates down and garnish them and make them beautiful, a wait station so all that the waiters need is in one spot.

What is on your menu?

It's all my favorite things. There's three kinds of soup every day, 12 salads, grilled panini, special sandwiches on homemade bread with a variety of bread choices. There will be quiche, of course, lots of desserts, crab

cakes, savory and dessert crêpes; a hot special will change daily. We're open for tea from 2 to 4 p.m. each day. We'll do assorted eclectic sandwiches and tons of desserts, specialty teas and coffees.

What are some of your desserts?

We'll do pies and cakes of the day. Our sweet crêpes will change; one is a takeoff on bananas foster. We'll have a cheesecake that will change. We probably will start with crême fraiche cheesecake with lemon, we'll have chocolate cake with espresso and cinnamon.

How did you come up with the name Pomegranate?

(That was) one of the hardest parts. I didn't want to be pigeonholed into one type of food. One friend said "how about The Pomegranate?" I love the color and the fruit itself. It means healthy, and the fruit has a history. I imagined the logo immediately, and it stuck.

Are you using pomegranates in the restaurant?

There are 5-by-4 foot oil paintings of pomegranates done by Judy Cavasos in the entryway. We have a room that used the color in paint. The house salad will have pomegranate vinaigrette in it; one of the desserts, chocolate cake, will come with pomegranate syrup. We'll have sparkling Italian soda with pomegranate and a pomegranate Champagne.

You have a beer and wine license?

Not by the time we open, but by the holidays for sure.

How is your new restaurant different from the Peach Café in Boerne?

I tried not to bring any similarities; I want it to be a different restaurant. (The Pomegranate has) a bigger menu, bigger space, a lot more diversity in kitchen. I'm running both, but wanted to keep them separate.

How will you divide your time?

I'll probably mostly be at Pomegranate until the end of the year, but I live in Boerne so I'll be able to check in the mornings. I have a great staff there; they've been with me for a long time.

So you won't have any of the Peach Café's great cheese rolls?

We're working on specialty breads. We'll have pistachio cranberry bread on the tables, maybe cheddar scones, maybe lavash. The yeast rolls won't be there.

Any other plans?

We're also going to do a Sunday brunch. It will be lunch and tea right now. It lends itself to a catering space; it will probably hold about 200 people with the patio and outside space, lunch and brunch and seven days a week.

— Karen Haram



PHOTOS BY HELEN L. MONTOYA/hmontoya@express-news.net

The chicken fried chicken plate is a crowd pleaser on Wednesdays at Loop 107 Burgers, Bakery & More in Adkins.

DINING ON A BUDGET | REVIEW

Fried pies are close to perfection

BY EDMUND TIJERINA
etijerina@express-news.net

ADKINS — Native or newcomer to this part of the country, once you get a taste of the fried pies at a renovated double-wide trailer, you'll wonder why it's taken so long to get here.

Overall, the dishes at Loop 107 Burgers, Bakery & More are quite good. The fried pies are in a league of their own. If you've never had fried pies, think of turnovers or empanadas using pie or biscuit dough and either deep fried or pan-fried. Like a good pie crust, there's sweetness from the filling and just a hint of salt in the dough. Personally, it's that salt that gives this dessert that extra bit of goodness. And a nice glaze doesn't hurt either.

Believe it or not, a trip over to this part of the county isn't that far, only about 20 minutes southeast from downtown. Drive that far north from downtown, and you're in the middle of strip malls and concrete — and no fried pies.

This place does not shout luxury, but get close to the front door and things start to smell good. A combination of baked goodies and savory



The smell of pastries — especially its assortment of delicious fried pies — keeps patrons returning to the restaurant in Adkins.

main dishes makes a great first impression.

Owners Helen Madla and Trina Hayes-Davis created a menu of burgers, fries and sandwiches, as well as a daily special. (One item is a nod to Madla's late husband, state Sen. Frank Madla. It's a hot dog called the Madla Frank.) The Wednesday special, chicken fried chicken, four-cheese mac and cheese, green beans and freshly baked roll, all worked brilliantly. Every item of this dish was exactly what it should be, flawlessly executed home cooking.

A tempting appetizer, Jim-

my's Everything but the Kitchen Sink Fries, somewhat took the concept of stuffed potato skins but used fries instead. This was a mound of fries topped with shredded cheddar cheese, bacon pieces, green onions and jalapeño slices. The dish could have been a little bit hotter in temperature, but it still worked well.

The Loop 107 Signature Burger worked fine, if not as well as the daily special, but a side order of onion rings ranked up there with the fried pies. On the suggestion of a very helpful waiter, we substi-

Loop 107 Burgers, Bakery & More

11505 Loop 107, Adkins
(210) 649-2300

HOURS: 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Sunday; 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Monday; 10 a.m.-8 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday; 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Friday and Saturday; closed Tuesday. \$

HIT: Wednesday special, onion rings, apple fried pie

MISS: Too much tarragon in chicken salad sandwich overpowered other flavors; salad dressings not made in-house.

LIGHTER CHOICE: A few salads with dressing on the side; Loop 107 Deli sandwich, hold the mayo.

NOTEWORTHY: Free Wi-Fi is available.

tuted the fabulous onion rings for the usual fries for a small surcharge.

The only disappointment came in a tarragon chicken salad sandwich with too much of the featured herb that overpowered the chicken. Not everything can be perfect.

But the apple fried pie here is pretty close to perfection.



HELEN L. MONTOYA/hmontoya@express-news.net

Ma Harper's Creole Kitchen serves a delicious cup of gumbo.

DINING IN | DINING OUT

Gumbo requires patience, love

BY EDMUND TIJERINA
etijerina@express-news.net

The most important ingredients in gumbo? Patience and love.

Oh sure, it requires a good roux, but the only way to get a good roux is a generous supply of patience. You don't want to rush the flour as it cooks to just the right stage of doneness.

Good gumbos come from light-colored rouxs, dark rouxs or those that are about the color of peanut butter; just don't burn it. Again, that comes from love and patience.

Those qualities are important in a lot more than in making gumbo.

The restaurants

Here are some places to get good gumbo:

Ma Harper's Creole Kitchen, 1830 S. W.W. White Road, (210) 333-9783. Ma may serve the best gumbo in the city.

Mickel's Country Cooking & Catering, 1630 E. Houston St., Suite 103, (210) 430-1310. It's one of the Friday specials.

Mama Lee's Soul Food, 310 Valley Hi Drive, Suite 205, (210) 675-6262

Big Easy Café, 5170 Randolph Blvd., (210) 653-5688

Tuckers Kozy Korner, 1338 E Houston St., (210) 320-2192

Ma Harper's Low-Fat Gumbo

Ingredients

- 1 pound diced chicken breast
- 1 pound diced turkey ham or sausage
- ½ cup chopped onion
- ½ chopped green onion
- ½ cup chopped green bell pepper
- 5 cloves minced garlic
- 1 cup flour, cooked in dry skillet until brown
- 4 cups chicken broth
- Cajun seasonings to taste, including thyme and bay leaf
- Salt, to taste
- Pepper, to taste
- 4 cups cooked white rice

Directions

In large pot, cook chicken in 2 tablespoons of water. Remove from pot. Do the same with turkey ham or sausage. Remove from pot. To remaining liquid, add onion, pepper and garlic. Simmer 10 minutes, then add browned flour and cook a few minutes longer, stirring constantly. Add chicken broth, seasonings, salt, pepper and meats. Cook over medium heat 45 minutes. Serve over rice. Makes 6 servings, each 450 calories, 39 g fat, 100 mg cholesterol, 670 mg sodium, 1 g dietary fiber, 10 g fat.

Source: Ma Harper's Creole Kitchen



KAREN HARAM/kharam@express-news.net

WHAT A DEAL

Breakfast options

What: All-you-can-eat breakfast

Where: Luby's locations at 18206 Blanco Road, 944 SE Military Drive, 5307 Walzem Road, 803 Castroville Road and 9251 Floyd Curl Drive

Cost: \$4.99 for adults, \$3.99 for children; available 8 a.m.-noon Saturdays and Sundays

Why it's a deal: Luby's all-you-can-eat doesn't mean you need to pig out, but it's a good way to sample some offerings you don't normally try. Options include pancakes, waffles, scrambled eggs, oatmeal, grits, hash brown potatoes, barbacoa, carnitas, bacon, sausage and more. Beverages are not included in the price.

Do you know a great restaurant deal? E-mail details to kharam@express-news.net

— Karen Haram