

Mike Cohen and family agree that the Firegrill Restaurants offer some of the best steaks in town

MtlRestoRap

MIKE COHEN

My family has been frequenting the Firegrill Restaurant (www.firegrill.com) for a few years now, enjoying some of the best steaks in town at their downtown Stanley Street and St. Laurent Sphèrtech 14 (next to Cinemas Guzzo) locations.

Recently, we added them to our take-out roster and let me say that they will firmly remain on our list. Chris Theo has owned the two restaurants for over 20 years with his brother Spyro and a cousin also named Chris. Like others in the business, the pandemic hit them like a ton of bricks. Pivoting to a take-out and delivery service was necessary and it has been done very successfully. Both locations allow for an easy curbside pickup format or you can go the front door and your order will be placed on a table. Home deliveries are managed directly via the restaurant's websites or through UberEats or Skip The Dishes.

The menu has been scaled down just a touch, with some items like roast beef and tuna steak/tataki/sandwich removed for now.

The Firegrill had always offered take-out and delivery. Soon after COVID hit over a year ago, the demand took off bigger than Theo could have expected. "It has



The author's order of ribs with BBQ sauce

been pretty steady and we have a lot of regulars," Theo said. "Take-out and delivery was never our bread and butter, but until the restrictions are lifted, it is now."

I made arrangements for a 5:45 pm pickup on a recent Friday from the downtown location. Spyro was waiting with my order when I arrived. Everything was divided into two packages: one for my mother-in-law and father-in-law and the other for my house.

With Queue de Cheval unlikely to ever open again and Moishes shut down, the Firegrill sits pretty now as without a doubt the best steakhouse in the downtown core. Here patrons can enjoy perfectly aged (28 days) steaks, grilled to perfection.

My mother-in-law and father-in-law started off by sharing a Caesar salad. At our house I had a hearty iceberg wedge salad and the others shared a nice-sized garden salad with some delicious honey mustard dressing on the side.

We were thrilled that our favorite appetizer was available, the spinach and artichoke dip. It features spinach and artichoke hearts in a creamy three cheese blend. With some small and soft pieces of pita bread to spread it on, this is a true delicacy.

The Firegrill is of course known for its perfectly aged steak, grilled to perfection. So it was no surprise that four out of five opted for that while I had some succulent ribs, basted in mesquite B.B.Q. sauce. I got home about a half hour after pickup. More time passed as we enjoyed our salads and appetizers. Yet the steaks and ribs needed barely a minute in the microwave to regain their heat.



Co-owner Spyro Theo presenting a two-family take-out order

We all ordered creamy garlic mashed potatoes on the side and they were soft as butter. By the way - they include the sides in your order, so it is not an extra.

"Steak travels well," says Theo. "Plus we know the secret. If you order it medium we will prepare it medium rare because in transit it continues to cook. When it arrives at its destination it is exactly the way you want it."

This was the first time I had ribs since the pandemic started and I happily made the right choice. In fact I ordered the ribs and shrimp combo - so three large-sized shrimps accompanied the ribs. Everyone had a big thumbs up for the steaks. And at 18 ounces, they are more than big enough to share.

The present menu has some other great options: crispy calamari and shrimp tempura as seafood starters; bao buns, popcorn chicken, wings or garlic bread for appetizers; greek salads; sandwiches; poutine; pasta; grilled chicken; NY striploin or filet mignon; and Atlantic salmon.

As for desserts, there is strawberry cheesecake, nutella (Nutella creamy cheesecake and roasted hazelnuts) and the superb tiramisu mascarpone, which both households ordered one each.

The downtown location is at 1490 Stanley Street and St. Laurent at 3500 Cote Vertu West. To order call 514-842-0020, 514-832-0222 or go online at www.firegrill.com from Noon until before curfew.



Succulent steaks on the grill at Firegrill

RestoNotes: Chef Danny Smiles lands at the Willow Inn

The Willow Inn, an iconic country restaurant, inn, and venue, in Hudson has announced that it has appointed **Danny Smiles** as Executive Chef & Manager of its institution. Smiles is the former chef de cuisine and co-owner of Le Bremner - a Montreal hot spot with a seafood-forward menu. Over the past years, he has worked with chefs across the country to create an extraordinary dining experience for many music and arts festivals, including Osheaga. "We are excited to showcase local talent in the kitchen and feature fresh produce from the area" says Patricia Ades, co-owner of the Willow Inn, "We are confident in Danny's skills and creativity to bring an experience as unique as our venue to our guests."

Danny Smiles has also had his fair share of the public eye. He was a winner in season one of Iron Chef Canada, runner-up on season three of Top Chef

Canada, and co-starred in the Food Network's Chuck and Danny's Road Trip. His love of food and easy-going manner has gained him numerous appearances on such TV shows as Breakfast Television Montreal, Salut Bonjour, Global News Morning as well as Canada AM.

Montrealer **Ira Dubinsky** has been appointed marketing director for KFC Canada. His finger licking good job is being done from Toronto... **Ted Dranias** of Petros Taverna has started his own YouTube Show. It is called *Table Talk With Ted* and it can be viewed at www.facebook.com/petrostaverna. Dranias will announce soon his plans to open a Petros in Fort Lauderdale.

The West Island Restaurants Facebook page continues to grow, with over 11,000 members. Moderator Corey Szwarcok, who owns a very successful team



Photo: Virginie Gosselin

Danny Smiles, Willow Inn Executive Chef & Manager

building company called Everblast Play, has a true success story on his hands.

— Mike Cohen