

I, Publius: Tasty breakfasts, lunches in Housatonic

By Alan Chartock, Special to The Eagle

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GREAT BARRINGTON -- There is even more good news for folks who like to go out for breakfast or lunch. The news comes from the new Brooklyn -- Housatonic or "Hoosieville" as it is sometimes called.

The new restaurant is called Pleasant and Main Café and General Store and it's the latest iteration of what was once Jack's. That's an appropriate name because the new eatery is at the intersection of Pleasant and Main streets. Clever!

Before we get to why this is such a great place, let's talk for a minute about the head man, Craig Berg. Berg comes to us via Manhattan, where he ran a restaurant in the shadow of the World Trade Center before the horrendous catastrophe that changed everything.

He watched the towers fall, experiencing the same grief as all New Yorkers. One day when visiting the Berkshires, which he had always loved, he saw the empty restaurant and immediately knew it was both a sign and an opportunity. In partnership with Pascale Rossi, a valued friend who lives in far away Corsica, Craig worked feverishly to set up his new place.

Craig loves the concept of neighborhood. He welcomes everyone but he says that he really wants to please the locals in Housatonic. There are all kinds of movies like "Babette's Feast," where an outsider comes in and wows the locals with the best food you can find anywhere. When Roselle and I tried Craig's new place, we knew we had found one of those unique spots where the food and the ambiance are unparalleled. The staff is extraordinarily friendly and helpful and many of the problems that had previously existed in the space, like the noise, have been dealt with. I don't know how Craig did it and I really don't care -- I just know that whatever he did worked.

Let me tell you about the food. The menu is so extraordinary that when you experience it you will be as amazed as we were. It passed the first test for me, since I have to have oatmeal with an egg white on top, and theirs was delicious.

It came with fruit and since fruit is points-free on Weight Watchers, I also ordered a fruit bowl, which was extraordinary and beautiful. I used some points on an order of bacon, which was delicious. Roselle was treated to a Clementine chocolate crepe and had a full mushroom and sausage crepe with a mesclun, beets and tomato salad.

Roselle also sampled a warm blueberry muffin and gave me a tenth of a point's worth. We also each had a nonalcoholic, blood orange mimosa and I had extraordinary black coffee and Roselle had what she described as an excellent cappuccino.

In case you don't know about Roselle and cappuccino, you should know that she is very, very fussy, so when she says that the drink is good, you had better believe that an expert has spoken.

Then Craig brought over some round sausage slices with fresh wild horseradish. The horseradish was from Spike, the local forager. It was hot stuff but it was great. Other entrees we didn't sample included seasonal fruit pancakes, French toast, all kinds of open face breakfast croissants, vegetarian quiche and lots of different sides like country ham, chicken apple sausage and much more.

The restaurant will be open from Thursday through Saturday for what Craig calls "Community Supper." Everyone is welcome. What a great place. Go in and say, "Alan sent me."

I love the idea that Housatonic is growing, what with the Brick House and Richard Bourdon's marvelous Berkshire Mountain Bakery. For too long, Housatonic has been thought of as a stepchild of Great Barrington. That's coming to an end. The village is well worth a day trip.

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