Chef Talk

The Irish WolfHound Restaurant and Pub

Call it the Butterfly Effect. Better yet, the Shamrock Effect.

Somewhere in Ireland a golden sunbeam bounces off a glistening leaf of clover and sparkles in the eye of a celebrated Arizona chef. A half a world away and six years later, a new restaurant opens its doors, its menu anchored in traditional Irish fare. Designing the menu is that same chef who never lost sight of the Emerald Isle.

“I know that if I hadn’t gone with Shamrock to Ireland, I probably wouldn’t be doing this today,” said Chef Randy Goodell. “Because of what I saw and learned on that trip to Ireland . . . it made such an impression.”

The Irish WolfHound Restaurant and Pub opened its doors on September 26th of this year in Surprise, Arizona, to a continually growing crowd of fans. And while Chef Goodell is quick to insist that it’s more about the accomplished staff, friendly feel and authentic décor that account for its surprising success, he won’t deny that his menu has hit the mark. Unlike many pubs, the WolfHound sells more food than spirits.

Appetizers like Kiernan’s Curry & Chips, Irish Jacketed Potato Nachos and Cliffs of Moher Steamed Shellfish promise a culinary journey to the old country, and are joined by even more enticing sandwiches and Irish specialties: Chef Randy’s Boiled Bacon Sandwich (slow cooked smoked pork, shredded on a hard roll with whole grain mustard and Irish whiskey braised leeks), Bangers and Colcannons (three grilled Irish sausages served with spuds, topped with parsley gravy and pan seared root vegetable), Shepard’s Pie, Declan’s WolfHound Irish Stew, Jameson’s Drunken Steak, Beef and Blue Boxty (two grilled beef tenderloin medallions cooked to order, layered between three potato Boxties, topped with blue cheese crumbles and covered with parsley gravy), and Monahan’s Double Bone Pork Chop.

Chef Goodell researched the history of Irish foods and tested his results with the first-generation Irish owners. They wanted traditional Irish food, not ‘pub grub,’ and he knew he’d have to make some changes to fit an American audience. In addition to the traditional items, diners will also find such American staples as chicken tenders, salmon, even shrimp and pasta. And all of it is chef-prepared.

“Everything on our menu is made fresh. Nothing is frozen but the ice cream and French fries. We make four soups fresh each day.” That explains one of the reasons the WolfHound boasts such an impressive staff of eleven chefs, cooks and kitchen prep. “They love it here because they get to cook real food. They’re doing the things they went to school for; it’s not packaged and processed food.”

Customers in Surprise and the West Valley have responded with hearty appetites. In the first five months of operation the Irish WolfHound grew from serving one hundred pounds of corned beef a week to over nine hundred. Additional pressure cookers were added, and they run twenty-four hours a day. On Friday nights, the restaurant serves three to four hundred pounds of cod.

“I thought this was going to be a sleepy little pub,” he said. “It’s the place to be. No hooks. No themes, we’re just an Irish pub. People can come in here and feel welcome, like family.” Which is exactly what the owners intended.

The WolfHound had a soft opening with a sandwich board out on the sidewalk, and because the community had seen the distinctive signage and watched as it was being completed, word spread quickly: *The WolfHound’s open!* “We opened the door at eleven and by one the place was full and it’s been that way every since.” Today they joke about what would have happened if we had put balloons on that sandwich board.

Chef Goodell admits that an Irish pub is the last place he expected to be. When he was first approached about the possibility, he said he laughed. He saw himself as a resort chef. He’d seen plenty of notoriety at some of Arizona’s most admired operations. He was eyeing retirement on the horizon, not a fresh start. “But I’ve been blessed here. I work more now than ever before, but it’s fun. We all feel very, very lucky.”

He mentions the Shamrock connection again, and the trip to Ireland in 2005 that planted the seed for what would eventually take root at the WolfHound. “I’ve worked with Shamrock forever. They’re Irish, not that that’s important. But they work on the same values that we do here. They take care of the customer like family. Wherever I’ve gone if they’re not working with Shamrock I’ve switched them over. Ted (Reisig, WolfHound’s Shamrock Sales Rep) has done a great job helping us grow.”

The Irish WolfHound prides itself on authenticity and a genuine sense of community--plus good food—all of which is “best experienced first hand.”

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16811 North Litchfield Road

Surprise, AZ 85374

623-214-1004

Monday - Friday 11:00AM - 2:00AM  
Saturday & Sunday - 10:00AM - 2:00AM

Chef Profile

Chef Randy Goodell’s culinary career began at a young age in Wyoming and South Dakota, but Arizona was the real beneficiary when he moved to the Valley in 1988. He has studied at the Culinary Institute of America, and has held top spots at the Wigwam Golf Resort and Spa, Ancala Country Club and Xona Resort Suites.

He credits the early years of his career “learning and working in fast food restaurants” with helping him gain the management skills necessary to help guide successful growth at The WolfHound Restaurant and Pub.

Goodell recipe: to come

Photos: to come