

Culinary style

• Relocated to the Firehall in downtown, Brickhouse is among Bend's best

By John Gottberg Anderson / *For The Bulletin*

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For quality steaks and seafood, served by a highly professional staff in an inviting atmosphere, the Brickhouse restaurant has no equal in Central Oregon.

Relocated three months ago from Bend's Mill Quarter to downtown's red-brick Firehall, Brickhouse is a worthy successor to the stylish space previously held by the Staccato and Bourbon Street restaurants.

It has been five years since owner Jeff Porad established the Brickhouse in downtown Redmond, 2½ years since he added a presence in Bend with a second restaurant overlooking the Deschutes River. Now, with the new Brickhouse, he's let it be known that he is a culinary force to be reckoned with in downtown Bend.

This is a restaurant that is defined more by the quality of its meats, seafood and produce than by any particular inclination toward creative cuisine. The menu is a traditional one, featuring the likes of filet mignon, blackened rib eye and New England lobster tail.

"Our steaks are sourced from Snake River Farms and Double R Ranch in Idaho," Porad said. "They are hormone-free, custom-aged at least 28 days and hand cut. We also feature Wagyu beef, which is American Kobe beef, which exceeds the quality of all other U.S. beef brands."

Meat of this quality, it is true, does not come cheap. A Brickhouse diner will pay \$70 for a 10-ounce Wagyu filet mignon, nearly twice that of a standard filet (priced at \$39). A true steak connoisseur won't bat an eyelash.

Many others, however, will. For them, Brickhouse offers an 8-ounce New York cut for as little as \$25 and a handful of so-called "casual dinners" for under \$20, including chicken marsala and beer-battered prawns. A meal here need not break the bank.

Ambience and service

In renovating the Firehall, Porad and his wife and co-owner, Jodi, placed an emphasis on casual fine dining. The front room, including the bar (with a brass pole down which firemen once slid), has shuttered doors that open to spacious sidewalk dining.



Ryan Brennecke / The Bulletin

The main room at Brickhouse Steak and Seafood restaurant in downtown Bend has shuttered doors that open up to a spacious sidewalk dining area.



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Access to an adjacent side room has been widened to make it an integral part of the seating area. A back room is more formal, with large plush booths enabling more privacy for family gatherings or romantic rendezvous.

This is a family business, so the couple's children are also involved — Jeff's son Taylor Porad is manager of the Bend restaurant, Jodi's daughter Bre Peters is manager of the Brickhouse in Redmond.

But many other faces will also be familiar to Bend foodies, from lounge staff to table servers. My dining companion and I knew that I was recognized, so I kept an eye on the treatment received by other tables — and it appeared as though every diner was treated with similar courtesy and attention.

Too often, servers make the mistake of delivering a meal and immediately forgetting the diners. This was not the case at Brickhouse. Assuring that beef was cooked to order, that side dishes were to our liking and that our wine glasses remained full, were part of the normal regimen for these servers.

Starting dinner

Freshly baked bread and butter launched our recent shared dinner at Brickhouse, followed by a pair of appetizers and a couple of salads.

Fresh seared sea scallops, cooked to perfection, were glazed with a honey-like sorrel beurre blanc sauce and garnished with slivers of lime and lemon peel.

A carpaccio of Wagyu beef was dressed with capers and shaved Parmesan cheese, then lightly drizzled with white truffle oil.

My companion's Caesar salad didn't have quite the anchovy paste she likes, but it was fresh and light, served with a tangy house-made Parmesan dressing.

My caprese salad was bold and wonderful, featuring thick slices of seasonal heirloom tomatoes, whole basil leaves and big chunks of buffalo mozzarella. It was drizzled with olive oil but not with balsamic vinegar. Salt and pepper accentuated its fresh flavor.

Great entrees

As an entree, my friend was delighted with her filet Oscar. A 10-ounce filet of beef tenderloin, cooked rare with a warm center, was topped with a generous amount of Dungeness crab meat and served with several spears of green asparagus and a rich and buttery Bearnaise sauce.

Skin-on Yukon Gold mashed potatoes accompanied, and a glass of



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Filet Oscar from Brickhouse Steak and Seafood includes beef tenderloin, Dungeness crab, asparagus, mashed potatoes and Bearnaise sauce.

Brickhouse Steak and Seafood

Location: 5 N.W. Minnesota Ave., Bend

Hours: 4:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. daily

Price range: Appetizers \$8 to \$15, entrees \$16 to \$50

Credit cards: American Express, Discover, MasterCard, Visa

Kids' menu: Seven meal choices priced at \$8

Vegetarian menu: The menu offers only salads, but pasta and vegetable dishes may be prepared on request

Alcoholic beverages: Full bar

Outdoor seating: Broad sidewalk area

Reservations: Highly recommended

Contact: 541-728-0334 or

www.brickhousesteakhouse.com

Also in Redmond: 412 S.W. Sixth St., 541-526-1782; open 4:30 to 9:30 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday
Scorecard

OVERALL: A

Food: A. A traditional menu is characterized by high-quality meats, seafood and produce.

Service: A. Highly professional staff treats every table with courtesy and attention.

Atmosphere: A-. The mood is casual fine dining, extending from classy dining room to sidewalk.

Value: A-. High-priced Wagyu steaks are balanced by a handful of dinners priced under \$20.

Next week: Versante Pizza and Westside Cafe

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peppery Seven Hills cabernet sauvignon from Walla Walla was a perfect complement.

I ordered my main course from the fresh fish selection. Pan-seared Alaskan halibut, falling apart at the touch of my fork, was sauteed in white wine with artichoke hearts, chopped tomatoes and a hint of truffle oil.

The fish was served with white rice and a vegetable medley of long green beans and slivered carrots. A lightly oaked MacRostie Sonoma Valley chardonnay, as recommended by Jeff Porad, accented the flavors.

Bar bites

Brickhouse is the sort of place I can drop by solo, enjoy a protein-rich bar snack and be thoroughly satisfied.

On one such recent visit, I arrived to find that an order of sushi-grade, big-eye ahi tuna had been flown in fresh that morning from Hawaii. I couldn't turn my back on such good fortune. The lightly marinated tuna poke was the tastiest raw fish I've had in many a moon.

On another such occasion, I enjoyed a small steak, cooked perfectly to order. And I feel just as welcome whether I am eating a light meal at the bar or an elaborate dinner for two in the dining room.

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