

Dining out: Blue Spoon Cafe is special

Blue Spoon Cafe & Creamery
550 Water St., Prairie du Sac, 643-0837
HOURS: 6 a.m.-8 p.m. Mon.-Fri., 7 a.m.-8 p.m. Sat., closed Sun.

Nearby lot parking; wheelchair accessible; checks, credit cards

*** out of ****

Michael Muckian
Special to The Capital Times — 6/27/2005 10:25 am

It's been more than five years since the original Blue Spoon opened in March 2000 and, given potential news on the horizon, we thought it was time to see how the old girl was faring.

The Blue Spoon, for those who haven't enjoyed its upscale yet casual soup-sandwich-salad menu along the banks of the Wisconsin River in Prairie du Sac, is the pet project of Craig Culver, head of Culver Franchising System Inc. The headquarters for the Butter Burger chain is located right next door.

Depending on the day, Culver might wax elegiac about the Blue Spoon -- named after the familiar blue plastic spoons served with Culver's custard -- saying it will always be the only one of its type. Lately he's indicated that somewhere down the grill there might be other Spoons, starting with one in Madison. No site has been selected and no timeline named, so a new Spoon may still be a ways off.

That's OK, because much of Spoon's charm comes from its location, with its outdoor tables overlooking the river. Recent upgrades that have expanded the little restaurant and enhanced its upscale character make it a more than suitable summer dining destination.

Thanks to the acquisition of a neighboring property, the Spoon has doubled its first-floor interior dining space. The restaurant also has increased its emphasis on wine, with racks of largely California varietals prominently displayed and a growing menu of monthly tastings. (The next one is July 13 to benefit Prairie du Sac's Good Neighbor free medical clinic. The cost is \$35 per person.)

After its location, the restaurant's true charm remains its food, a selection of creative sandwiches and appetizers served in that familiar Culver's style. After placing our order at the counter, we parked ourselves at an outdoor metal table next to one of several creations by Sauk County junk sculptor Dr. Evermor and waited. Several smiling Spoon employees soon arrived with our lunches.

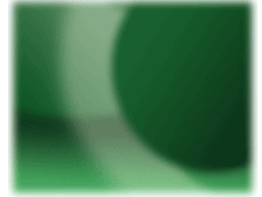
Sandwiches come in half-size (\$3.99), full-size (\$6.49) or deli-size (\$7.99) portions accompanied by a choice of potato chips, potato salad, apple-baked beans or coleslaw. We tried four sandwiches and only one of us was slightly disappointed.

Top was the Veggie Meister, a blend of guacamole, artichoke hearts, tomatoes, Kalamata olives, green and red peppers, onion, mushroom slices and spinach leaves. The sandwich, served on the Spoon's ubiquitous cracked wheat bread, sparked with fresh flavors made more interesting both by the mushroom slices and olive halves.

Significantly different but no less appealing was the Blue Ribbon Chicken



The cafe's name comes from the blue spoons at Craig Culver's other restaurants.



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Salad sandwich. The bird had been blended with Granny Smith apples and roasted pecans in mayonnaise, which the diner said tasted like a Waldorf salad. Tomato slices and fresh lettuce completed the creation.

The Chicken Curry Wrap (\$5.99), the daily special, was chicken salad with mango, grapes, cashews and spinach leaves dressed with a mild curry and wrapped in a low-fat tortilla. Staunch curry fans might find the presence of the piquant sauce subtle to nearly nonexistent, but as an accent, it served the dish well.

The Great Gobbler was a little less than we had hoped. Smoked turkey breast had been marinated with sun-dried tomatoes and cracked peppercorns, then served with Swiss cheese, mayonnaise, Dijon mustard, lettuce and tomato on (of course) cracked wheat bread. Despite sounding so good, the Gobbler weighed in as rather bland and not a sandwich to order a second time.

The apple-baked beans were very good, indicative of the care manager Mike Boss brings to the Blue Spoon. In some ways we hope there won't be any more Blue Spoons because that will give Prairie du Sac something about which to continue crowing.

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