

Food: The Oakhurst Diner

MARSDEN EPWORTH

New Menu, New Spirit,
A Diner Starts Over

It looks the same.

But it's not.

Not at all.

The old Millerton Diner has new owners, a new menu, a

new name and, I guess from looking at the clumps of people by the cash register waiting for a table, new customers.

John Panzer, his brother, Justin, and Paul Harney renamed their new property on Main Street The Oakhurst Diner (after the inn on Maple Avenue that burned to the ground in the '60s because Harney had the old sign but in the end they did not use it). Then Harney, the foodie of the three, John Panzer says, added bistrotto dishes to the familiar American diner-on-a-highway fare: Steak frites, leek-and-potato soup and a frisée salad with bacon, a sherry vinaigrette and a poached egg are listed alongside burgers (from grass-fed cows), tuna salad and corn dogs.

So with a few surprises here and there, like coconut water with or without aloe, or broccoli rabe on a chicken cutlet sandwich, the menu still carries

diner standards: chicken with dressing and gravy, meatloaf, coffee, tea and milkshakes, and towering layer cakes displayed under glass at one end of the counter.

Clearly, the old Millerton Diner, once dowdy, even somber, has morphed into an interesting place. It still draws after-school 10-year-olds taking vigorous spins on the counter stools, also mothers, local contractors in work boots and flannel shirts, vegetarians, restless adolescents, the retired and now the curious. Everybody. Even Chris Noth, it has been reported. You know. Mr. Big from "Sex and the City."

And it is still rigged with seven booths, a tight squeeze, some say, that drives a substantial citizen or two elsewhere, but these seats give others a great look at Main Street through the expanse of plate glass.

So the Oakhurst looks familiar, but the mood is buzzy. Upbeat. Staffed mainly by attractive, seemingly unsupervised young people chattering about their roiling social lives, this diner is like a



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high school cafeteria and customers take the part of new kids — outsiders who are dealt with pleasantly but breezily.

Once in a while you wait 30 minutes for your order. But it's probably going to be pretty good. And reasonable. Prices run \$6.99 for a sandwich with a side dish; dinners are \$7.99 to \$14.99; breakfasts: \$2.75 to \$9.99.

The hanger steak comes with béarnaise sauce (delectable) and fries (regret-

table); a roast pork sandwich layered with cilantro and shredded pickled carrot on a baguette is a treat. So is the eggs Benedict.

And I never thought I would have a pungent dish of kimchi topped with a fried egg made by a chef named Krishna in a diner. In Millerton. That was fabulous.

The only thing missing was a glass of wine. But Panzer says a liquor license is in the works.

The Oakhurst Diner is at 19 Main St. in Millerton, NY. It is closed Tuesdays; otherwise open 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. every day except Fridays and Saturdays when the diner stays open to 10 p.m. Breakfast is served until 3 p.m. 518-592-1313 for information or to call in takeout