



# A steak house and a second chance

By Lisa Bolt Simons

**O**n the corner of First Avenue NE and Third Street NE in Faribault, a brick building stands three stories tall across from the post office. In its 150-year history, this former shoe company and furniture warehouse has burned down twice. It is apt, then, that a steak house that closed in July after only a year's run has reopened under different management to try again.

I was fortunate to go to Monte's with my book club – lots of flavors chosen, lots of comments spoken. Out of the eight of us, three had been to this restaurant since its reopening in March. One had been twice in the past month.

We sat in the back bar area, where walls were painted a metallic gray with white texture, a life-size black-and-white photograph of a man drinking from a bottle above us on the wall. Lights reminiscent of Thomas Edison's early bulbs lined the ceiling above the bar. The front restaurant area kept its renovated warehouse charm

– high ceilings, wood and brick floor, booths with frosted partitions. Two-foot-tall brown curtains that provide some privacy from the busy cross streets have been added.

We were soon greeted by a young gentleman, our bartender/waiter for the evening. Debbie wanted a Cosmo; could he make a really good one? He said he hadn't before, that he was still learning. We appreciated the honesty. He ended up making one that convinced Debbie to order another. Five of us shared a bottle of sweet Starling Castle Riesling.

Our appetizer was a bit too long in coming but worth the wait – brie baked in a flaky puff pastry with caramelized onions and bacon. The raspberry reduction glaze and creamy cheese delighted all eight of us.

Our salads came, and we enjoyed the small plates of tossed greens or Caesar. Carolyn says, "I wonder where the bread is. I heard you get focaccia with a dipping sauce,

but the two times I've been here, it wasn't served to us."

When the server brought our food, Carolyn asked about the bread. Warm slices of herbed focaccia – crusty crust, soft middle – arrived with a salty, pimiento-tasting sauce that all of us declined. We were surprised by the size of the entrée portions – mine alone could've fed three of us.

Colleen had the Monte's Philly. She said the menu claimed mushrooms, but she barely found any. It was also too peppery for her taste. (The next day, my neighbor told me her co-worker recently had the Philly for lunch and loved it.) Shelly's 10-ounce sirloin was too well done and dry. Diane and Rhonda gave the Steakhouse Burgers a thumbs up. Debbie ordered the grilled shrimp. With the recommendation from the bartender/waiter because the shrimp might be too bland, she also ordered a side of lemon butter sauce. But she and I agreed the shrimp didn't need anything

else; the skewers arrived ideally seasoned. Confetti rice accompanied Debbie's shrimp, and she enjoyed the flavor of the onions and peas in white rice. Carolyn, the twice-over returnee, had the Chicken Marsala and said the gravy tasted like it came from a jar. I disagreed. Although I wish there would've been more mushrooms, I enjoyed the nontraditional addition of bacon. Shari ordered the unlimited soup and salad. The Chicken Wild Rice was to die for – thick and almost smoky. But her bowl proved to be too big; when she ordered Pasta e' Fagioli (hearty but spicy, which should be mentioned on the menu), she could only handle one bite before she boxed the rest. My New York Strip needed two inches of fat cut off each end before it was edible. I appreciated the slathering of mushrooms on top. The garlic mashed potatoes with the red skin on were delicious; and the broccolini, broccoli's lanky cousin with sparse florets, was steamed just right.

For dessert, we all shared tiramisu, crème brulee and an apple pastry. The tiramisu's presentation was unique – upright in a wine glass. But Shelly thought the ladyfingers were stale, while Colleen detected an aftertaste with the cream. I thought the flavors didn't blend well. The crème brûlée was a big disappointment – it tasted like thick pudding instead of a rich custard. Debbie orders it at every restaurant she goes to and did not like Monte's version. When the cooks tried to heat it up for her, it melted. The second try proved to be a bit better but still not on par with Debbie's palate. Had the apple pastry been served with more caramel and not been burned on the bottom, it

would have been a true delight. I found one little piece that wasn't quite as burned and discovered the apple chunks baked to a mild crunch amidst a flaky crust.

The prices seemed more reasonable than the previous Monte's, especially considering the portions. A customer can order a steak or seafood dinner for about \$25 or can stick with a salad, burger, or sandwich for about \$10. Overall, we thought the menu offered a good variety of food at a reasonable cost.


Although there's some refining to do, it takes time to rebuild, and Monte's is out to prove this steak house is well worth the visit.

Monte's Steakhouse  
31 Third Street NE, Faribault  
507.333.9393  
montessteakhouse.com

**Monte's leftover appeal**

My husband says my leftover steak, potatoes and broccolini (which he first thought was an odd variety of asparagus) were the best leftovers he had eaten in a long time.

**A follow-up visit on Mother's Day**

With the boys on a camping trip, my daughter and I went to Monte's for Mother's Day brunch. The food was delicious – even the desserts – and it was much more organized and service-friendly than last year under the former owner. Moms also received roses. As my daughter and I got into our car parked out front, the server slicing the savory beef tenderloin waved at us through the window. Bravo, Monte's! 



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