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Michael Marzano, Angie Marzano and Joel Poston

FLAPPING DELICIOUS

Hot Mama's is so much more than a wing joint
 BY ANDY VALENTINE

Wings. Hear that word and birds, angels, Paul McCartney and food is pretty much what comes to everyone's mind, right?

It seems chicken wings have been a staple of barbeques, Super Bowls and southern restaurants since time began, so it's only fitting that a new joint in Eugene called Hot Mama's Wings garnered hype before its doors even opened.

The place is all casual attire and low prices, and it boasts a family friendly environment as well as a bar area. You can get pick-up, delivery, eat in, whatever the hell you want — it doesn't matter — as long as you've got a hankering for good, homemade food.

Michael Marzano — who co-owns the establishment with his wife, Angie — grew up in Eugene and met head chef and general manager Joel Poston at the Oregon Country Fair some years back. After life took Michael elsewhere for a while (namely Portland), he decided it was time to pay tribute to the town that raised him.

"[Eugene] is a great town," Marzano said. "This is the best way I could think to give back for all it gave us."

Not only was this refreshing to hear, it also gave insight into the deep commitment to community spirit that Hot Mama's Wings hopes to foster. It's not hard to pick up on the vibe that locality and togetherness are valued highly by the folks at Hot Mama's, which is clearly evident in everything from their decoration to their ingredients.

"We're trying to be as local as possible, staying inside Oregon for a good portion of our food, from the chicken to the produce," said Poston, who is also responsible for creating the menu. But the food isn't all that's coming from a local source; the tabletops, seats, bar, appliances and, well, pretty much everything else, is either used or restored. The bar is made of a bowling alley wood, the seats are made of reclaimed timber from the Nike store, and the ceiling insulation is post-consumer recycled. Really, it's about being as green as possible, a trait that's hard to come by in restaurants. The Hot Mama's crew built the space sustainably and they plan to run it as such.

"What we do in the space is important," co-owner Angie Marzano said, "so recycling, composting, energy efficient lights and heating, blow driers in the bathrooms to cut down on paper use... We all have an environmental ethic in how we live and how we want to do business, and we're going to operate in that way."

So now you know: Hot Mama's Wings is more sustainable than a solar panel. Take note when you go in there. As for the food, well, it shouldn't be all that difficult to notice. They're going for a "casual neighborhood café" feel, with burgers, soups, sandwiches, salads, brunch, breakfast, beer on tap and, of course, chicken wings. Then there's the kids menu, a piece of the restaurant industry that has always lacked style... until now.

"Peanut butter is salt, sugar, peanuts and oil, and that's all it should be," said Poston, who churns his own peanut butter for the organic PB&Js that the restaurant will offer.

"We want there to be healthy options for children so that families can come in and feed their kids right" Angie Marzano explained. "[Michael and I] have a young family, and there aren't that many places like this where we can feed our kids, and so we want to encourage young families also to come in for that reason."

The target price range for a two courser and some drinks for two people is under \$30, with the kids menu holding strong at "five bucks or under," so affordability is yet another value that the Hot Mama's crew wears on its sleeve. It's all about "leaving with a full belly for not a whole lot of money."

On top of all this, they're creating an atmosphere of togetherness that wings can only hope to provide standing alone: They have big screens to watch games, a bar and giant communal table (which is also made of a bowling alley scrap) as well as booths that allow folks to create their own atmosphere. All this, from a simple wing joint? I know: it rocks. ■

Hot Mama's Wings opens Friday, Feb. 4 — just in time for Super Bowl Sunday — and is located at 420 W. 13th Ave.