

### Continued from previous page

From a search through the Birdies Facebook page, it appears that the charity work started when they owned the restaurant. Chef and owner Jeremy Buck bought Birdies about four years ago. He is continuing the tradition of fundraising and giving back to the community.

Buck has also continued with many of the same menu items, keeping the Southwestern influence in several dishes. The restaurant is currently open 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday with very limited dine-in seating, according to its website.

My first meal was a takeout lunch. I called in advance to order it for pickup. As Birdies' food is described as "farm-fresh with a Southwestern flair," I ordered the Southwest Chicken Salad. The first thing I noticed was as advertised: fresh ingredients. Fried chicken, black beans, tomato, corn, avocado and quinoa were piled onto crisp romaine lettuce. A roasted tomato-chipotle dressing added the Southwest flavor and a good kick that was enhanced by the corn kernels' sweetness. In all, it was balanced, fresh and satisfying. Adding a little creamy cheese might have helped to calm the spice in the dressing. I would definitely order it again.

The Porcini Mushroom Burger didn't have the same level of freshness. The burger was over-done and dry. The sautéed mushrooms added a little moisture as did porcini-truffle butter.

Although there was a generous spread of the butter, there was no hint of truffle flavoring. While the dryness of the Swiss cheese can be attributed to the delayed time between when the burger was prepared, and the time to get it home, if I were to order it again, I would definitely request that the burger be cooked medium or medium-rare.

Birdies really shines at breakfast. The menu includes Eggs Benedict (Bennys) and scrambles that feature fresh, Southwestern or Pacific Northwest ingredients and pancakes, waffles, and such.

This time, I chose local cuisine with the Pacific Northwest Benny. Instead of an English muffin, the Benny's base are two spinach, jalapeno and herb pancakes. Each is topped with a poached egg and the right



The Belgian-style waffle is made with a malted batter and sprinkled with powdered sugar.



The Porcini mushroom burger is served with Chimayo Chile fries.

amount of hollandaise sauce. The sauce is a perfect balance of lemon and buttery flavors, but there is no cayenne sprinkle to give it zing. Instead of a slice of salmon, it comes with two small chunks of blackened salmon. The perfectly cooked salmon was moist inside with a crusty, spiced exterior. It was a delicious combination. I noticed from pictures that this was the same preparation as it had been when I visited the restaurant

in 2015. The Bennys come with a choice of rice and beans or hash browns. The hash browns were crispy on top with creamy, cooked potatoes inside and no greasiness.

As I'm a banana-nut pastry fan, I also tried the banana-nut cakes. Although the menu describes them as "Johnny Cakes,"

they did not have a cornmeal flavor and tasted more like traditional pancakes. The bananas are cooked into the almost plate-sized cakes that are topped with candied walnuts. It was almost sweet enough to forgo syrup. Real maple syrup is available on request. It is served with pats of butter, but you can request whipped butter and real maple syrup.

The cakes are served with meat. I chose bacon. The bacon had a distinct pepper flavor — either from hatch chilis or possibly green pepper. The server assured me that it didn't have that flavor but was glad to substitute ham for the bacon.

A Belgian Style Waffle was the last dish we tried. It's a malted battered waffle dusted with powdered sugar. The sugar complemented the malt flavor, and the waffle was light and airy. Both the banana-nut cakes and the waffle came with a side of fresh fruit, including sliced apples, fresh bananas, sweet melon and pineapple.

When I contacted the owner about this review, he informed me that he couldn't handle more walk-in business at this time.



Birdies Cafe Southwest Chicken Salad is fresh and topped with tomato-chipotle dressing.

Hoping to simply serve his current clientele and concerned for the safety of his staff as well as low staffing levels, he asked that people not come to the restaurant until the pandemic has subsided and they are fully open. If you are interested in trying Birdies, perhaps you'll want to wait a while to try it.

■ Reporter: barb@barbgonzalezphotography.com