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The new incarnation is airy and open. Two stories of windows bring in light in the entry from the parking lot. The bar and restaurant are one large area. Sleek metal and wood tables and chairs give a sophisticated but casual air. Cowhide armchairs create a conversation area near a fireplace. On the front of the building, a wall opens up to several tables of outdoor dining.

While I'm not reviewing the beer, General Manager Katie Chase told me that because of the pandemic, they were lucky to be able to hire Ryan Schmiede. Schmiede had been working as assistant brewmaster at Deschutes Brewery. He's brought deep knowledge and creative ideas to the new brews. Cascade Lakes beer pairings are listed with each menu item.

Ted Swigert of Drake and Washington Kitchen and Cocktails helped transform the restaurant from a simple brewpub to a culinary taproom. Swigert and Drake executive chef John Gurnee set the direction for the menu, and Cascade Lakes' executive chef Jeff Kelly took it from there. Both influences can be seen in the recipes. Charred carrot hummus, long served at Drake, is used in the veggie wrap. Kelly brings Shrimp and Grits and a Smoke Shrimp "Po Boy" from his Southern roots.

My friend and I sat on the patio to enjoy the warm weather one recent evening for dinner. She wanted something light and opted for the Beets and Sweets Salad. Everything in the salad was fresh and crisp — from the cashew bits to the lettuce. Small cubes of roasted sweet potatoes, pickled onions, thinly sliced table radishes and thick-sliced watermelon radishes accompanied the tender-roasted blush candy stripe beets. The whipped chevre encircled below the bowl's lip, and it was lightly tossed with a spiced citrus dressing. The salad was well balanced with sweet, nutty, sour and the wonderful crisp freshness of the lettuce. I found it perfect for a warm summer supper, but my friend felt the beets were salty.

I'm a big fan of Shrimp and Grits, but this dish was a disappointment. It's a simple dish of shrimp, pork belly and fried tomato atop smoked grits. Small pork belly chunks were hard and over-cooked, offering little flavor. Big chunks of mushy tomatoes dominated the sauce. The creamy grits had almost no taste. After my visit, I spoke with Chef Kelly, who explained that wasn't how the dish should have been prepared.

A few days later, I returned to try the Shrimp and Grits the way it was intended. As I suspected, it was much more nuanced



Walls have been torn down and windows added for a lighter interior.

than the first preparation. The pork belly was crispy but retained its richness. The tomatoes enhanced the sauce. The grits were spiced, smoky, textured corn that played against the other flavors. Kelly told me that the heirloom grits are brought in from Charleston, South Carolina.

In our conversation, I discovered that the Veggie Wrap I ordered for lunch on my next visit was also not prepared correctly. The first wrap had a thin layer of charred carrot hummus and a pile of dry lettuce. While it was fresh, it wasn't appealing. The menu describes the wrap as having cucumber, carrot, basil, mixed lettuce, quinoa and tzatziki. When I returned, I tried it again. The wrap was utterly different. A thick layer of charred carrot hummus surrounded a mixture of lettuce, quinoa, and other ingredients dressed in tzatziki. It was a fresh, satisfying wrap. Having been a fan of the charred carrot hummus at Drake, I was disappointed that it didn't have that same sweet taste in either of these wraps.

As a hamburger is a staple at most brew-

eries, I gave the Cascade Lakes Burger a try. It was a thick, juicy patty with special sauce (a ketchup and aioli base with housemade relish) beer cheese, shredded lettuce and housemade bread and butter pickles on a Big Ed's Kaiser bun that stands up to the sauce and beer cheese. It was a good mix of flavors that was made better with a bit of sweet and salty bacon jam. The fries that come with the sandwiches and wraps are cut for each order and fried with potato skins. They are perfectly crunchy — fried on the outside and creamy in. I found myself eating all the fries with each meal.

For a bit of greens to go with my burger, I chose the Harvest Bowl as the description sounded healthy. Wheatberry's nutty flavor can add texture and dimension in place of rice or quinoa. This salad adds toasted wheatberry to warmed kale with crispy, creamy potato wedges and spiced peanuts. A generous serving of oyster and maitake mushrooms with a hint of sweet and sour was mixed into the salad. A cured egg yolk adds creaminess to the herb vinaigrette

dressing. The kale was tender with no hint of bitterness. It was a very earthy, woody salad, but it could have used some acid or more sour tones to lighten it overall.

I also grabbed a French Dip sandwich to go. The meat was very tender and rich. A little bit of sharp provolone and caramelized onion gave it some interest on the potato hoagie bun. It came with au jus that was the perfect accompaniment (and was not salty as is often the case with au jus). It was simple but a good choice after a day of hiking or paddling around the Cascade Lakes.

As restaurants are still struggling to hire qualified employees, the new Cascade Lakes kitchen is hoping they can find consistency in executing the recipes. If you go to the restaurant and don't receive the meal as it is intended, Kelly encourages you to ask that it be made right.

I'm confident that they will work it out as the kitchen and staff I encountered are dedicated to providing the culinary taproom experience they promise.

■ Reporter: barb@barbgonzalezphotography.com