



DINING REVIEW >> by Timothy Bolger

Maxwell's

501 Main Street
Downtown Islip
631-210-0011
Noon to 2 a.m. Daily

UPON PASSING THROUGH the wooden entrance of Maxwell's in Islip, patrons are greeted with a mouthwatering aroma wafting from the kitchen behind the U-shaped bar that links seating areas on either side.

The casual bar and grill with a rear patio for al fresco dining offers an innovative American menu with a family friendly atmosphere during the day that turns into a popular nightlife hotspot after sundown. During a recent visit, this reporter and his date were left speechless as

of this bar is a nod to the founder of the company that now operates nine restaurants, offers catering, and runs a hotel and the Blaze Pizza chain.

This backstory is subtly woven into Maxwell's vintage ambiance, which features antique carousel horses, black-and-white framed photos adorning the walls and old fashioned light fixtures bookending the main entrance. It's a feel that makes Maxwell's a perfect fit for the heart of downtown Islip, where surrounding businesses also maintain a vintage vibe.

The thoughtfulness that goes into the presentation also comes through in the dishes Maxwell's serves. We started by sharing the Thai Calamari appetizer featuring an amazing blend of peanuts, cilantro, lime and sweet chili glaze. We will definitely be back for more and to try the Buffalo Chicken Empanadas, the Tuna Poke Nachos and Southwest Chicken Spring Rolls.

For the main course, I tried the grilled chicken bruschetta with Asia-go cheese, tomato basil Kalamata olive bruschetta, rocket arugula salad and aged balsamic, which was as amazingly delicious as it sounds. Though it was a tough choice between that, the chicken jamba-



we devoured our scrumptious appetizers and entrees washed down with some specially made beverages.

But before sinking our teeth into the meal or sipping our drinks, we were first met with a taste of some local history. The sign facing Main Street notes that Maxwell's was established in 1890. This isn't when the bar opened, but refers to the founding of its Great River-based parent company, Lessing's.

Maxwell Lessing founded the company over a century ago as a lunch counter in lower Manhattan, where he helped popularize the sandwich, which was new at the time, and was the first New York restaurant to serve Coca-Cola, helping to shape the modern lunch menu, according to the company. The name

laya or the honey bourbon glazed salmon with quinoa, roasted sweet potato and sautéed spinach, which my date gave me just a bite to sample before she devoured the heavenly combination.

On a return visit, we will surely try one of their amazing specials. On the night we were there, specials included a Gorgonzola-encrusted filet mignon, crab-stuffed flounder or the panko Parmesan crusted pork cutlet. The food specials are in addition to their standing weekly specials, such as Wine Down Wednesdays, Steakhouse Thursdays and Lifeguard Night.

To wash our dinner down, we had the Local Ale, a special beer made just for Lessing's by Blue Point Brewing Co. They also have



a Local Blonde. And for liquid dessert we had the fabulous BBTC (short for Bayberry Point Tennis Club, a reference to the tony side of Islip) made with Finlandia Mango Fusion Vodka, Malibu Coconut Rum, pomegranate juice, pineapple

juice and grenadine in a raspberry sugar rimmed glass.

Next time, we'll be sure to try The Fire Island martini.

Find them online at www.lessings.com/corporate/restaurants/venue/maxwells.

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