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A 'taste' of Louisiana in Oakville

By KATHY YANCHUS
Oakville Beaver Staff

You won't find anything like it anywhere else in Oakville. And upon stepping inside Mardi Gras, for just as long as it takes to indulge in some blackened fresh fish, deep fried scallops and coconut beer shrimps, you are temporarily transported to southern Louisiana.

The operation known as Mardi Gras is an extensive one, from the diningroom areas, which can accommodate 165 patrons - to the takeout and delivery service of everything from cajun creole pizza to cajun spicy chicken wings.

FAVORABLY PRAISED

Mardi Gras is an extension of owner Sam Pavlovic's popular and very successful Sammy's Creole on Lakeshore Blvd West in Islington. This eight-year-old establishment, which features tropical gardens and an outdoor cafe, packs in the crowds every week and has been favorably praised by Toronto Life magazine as well as other publications for its decor and menu.

Pavlovic chose to target

Oakville, and specifically the old Shelley's building on Robinson Street, because of its beautiful locale, the tremendous possibilities for his style of hospitality and because of the proximity to points further west.

Whatever Pavlovic touches, turns to gold, he says with unabashed confidence, except his Oakville restaurant, he adds wistfully.

From waiter to cook to floor manager and now owner, working in such locales as Le Provencal, Captain John's and Two Sisters in Louisiana along the way, Pavlovic has carved his way through the ranks and now not only does he have Sammy's as testimony to his expert entrepreneurship but he successfully markets four of his own cajun spices.

Pavlovic doesn't understand



The men behind Mardi Gras, from left to right Peter Nedeljkovic and Sam Pavlovic with Remy DeMello providing the musical backdrop.

why the Louisiana concept has not taken off in Oakville with the pot full of enticing ingredients that comprises Mardi Gras.

"If people knew who is behind this (it is not the previous owner)," emphasizes Pavlovic. "The prices are good, the products are so fresh. It is a beautiful cajun menu. We also cater to the other, with food that is not too spicy."

Pavlovic is a hands-on owner, choosing the fresh fish and vegetables himself and putting in arduous days, executing tasks "from signing cheques to purchasing orders."

One of the major renovations Pavlovic undertook when he tookover the vacant building, was to create an open concept kitchen so people can not only see their dinner being cooked but develop a rapport with the chef, whom Pavlovic brought to Oakville from

Sammy's.

The interior is a comfortable combination of wood beams, hanging plants, and pink and

green hues. There are cosy fireplaces to snuggle up to and continual music with the live jazz sounds of Remy DeMello and the Mardi Gras Band, every Thursday to Sunday, beginning at 8 p.m.

There are other nice touches, reminiscent of southern hospitality not the least of which is the homemade bread pudding, bread rolls and pecan pie, as well as Pavlovic's own coconut beer shrimps "which other restaurants have been copying," says bar manager, Teri Neeb.

FRIENDLY SERVICE

Pavlovic invites people to drop by whether it's for a full meal or light snacks at the lengthy, rectangularly-shaped bar and he guarantees a different experience and friendly service.

Mardi Gras hours are Monday to Friday lunch, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.; Monday through Saturday, dinner, 4:30 to 11 p.m.; Sunday, dinner, 4:30 to 10 p.m.

To book a reservation or Christmas party, call 338-6484.

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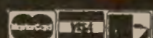


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