

Sassy Marie's Review

By: Suz Pisano



Don't you love when something old turns new again? In the great city of ours, fourth generation Northsiders present Sassy Marie's. She's a new restaurant located on Pittsburgh's re-emerging North Shore, where The James Street Tavern once was. The Nightwire crew was invited by new owners; Duke & Stephanie Britton, a brother & sister team, we couldn't wait to give their exciting new venture a try.

Everyone in our party totally enjoyed sitting at the gorgeous, decadent wooden bar that almost runs the entire length of the building. They sure don't build them like that anymore and I don't know about you but when I'm in an old building on the North Side, I really appreciate the history.

I want to jump right into our dining experience because it was warm, welcoming, gorgeous, delicious, extravagant, and... not as pricey as you would expect. Our server Katie greeted us with a wine list and rose petals sprinkled on our table. (I seriously never knew how much I would love rose petals sprinkled on my table until someone actually did it for me.) It really set the mood for the table and everyone began to relax and absorb the atmosphere. By now, all of our readers are quite aware that I'm a sucker for great atmosphere. Sassy Marie's is gorgeous, elegant but unpretentious. Service is impeccable. This place is going to be a huge hit, especially when the North Shore explodes with the casino industry. Sassy Marie's is the place you'll take your date to get away from it all- I predict it'll be the place that everyone talks about like it's a closely guarded secret.

We started off with appetizers- Coconut Chicken

served with a side of Spicy Orange Plum Dipping Sauce (\$6). These were presented in a wonderful & fun way that just added that special touch. We also tried the Seared Big Eye Ahi (\$11) sesame crusted & served perfectly rare with a sweet soy sauce. It was so good that we ate every bite & there was plenty to share. An interesting Mango Slaw was a delightful compliment to this small plate. Sassy Marie's offers interesting small plates from Spinach, Artichoke & Roasted Tomato Dip (\$7) to Tso Good Calamari (\$8). A daily soup selection and Delta King Gumbo are also offered. A wine list is available and we selected Columbia Crest Cabernet (\$26). Salads at Sassy Marie's include Berry Chevre & Pecan (\$7) which I'll call extra delicious & decadent. Salad should just not be that good. The Southwest Ceasar (\$4) has Garlic Egg Dressing infused with Chili. It's also extra delicious with a nice twist on an old favorite. The spicy seemed just right.

Our selected entrees began arriving and we anticipated trying each other's wonderful choices. What you may not realize about conducting a dining review is that they bring out your food, you see it, you can't wait to taste it, but you will wait because we have a photographer on our crew who has to make the photographs that you see accompanying each month's review. I truly hate that part. We first tasted Tim's entrée- the Beef & Buffalo (\$13.50). It was thick slices of grilled savory ground Bison & Angus Beef served with sautéed Wild Mushrooms, Smashed Potatoes & Penn Dark Onion Gravy. In the immortal words of Rachael Ray.....Yum-O. It'll take you back to grandma's in the most glorious comfort food zone ever. I got to (stole) his left-overs & totally got to enjoy this meal the next day. Now the Jumbo Lump Crab Cakes (\$18) were no slouch. I was glad I personally ordered this dinner because it was mine & I got the left-overs! Two Crab

Cakes were served over the Mango Slaw that I like so much from the appetizer. They were presented with a Jalapeno Mango Aioli & Red Pepper Puree. The Crab Cakes were real lumpy with not very much filler- it's definitely the accompaniments that make this entrée. Joyce actually found something that she didn't want to share- Blackberry Pork Tenderloin (\$16). It was "simply incredible" as she'd put it & you all know that she's very picky. The berries were huge and the Blackberry Demi-Glace was subtle and enhanced with a hint of Dijon Mustard. Smashed potatoes were served as the side. Our resident "Diner/Photographer" Craig, who really does "work for food" ordered "something he usually wouldn't" and boy was I glad- he had the Cedar Plank Salmon (\$18).

Shipped in directly from Washington State, and cooked to perfection on a charred wood plank, this salmon is like butter. A Honey Mustard Bourbon Marinade & Glaze flavors this fish to precision. Crispy Onion Straws sit atop the salmon right next to the Smashed Red Skin Potatoes. This plate was definitely worth the wait (I tried this last).

Nightwire offers our sincerest congratulations to Chef Rich Horn who developed the menu and mans the kitchen. His emphasis is on grilled menu items, as he's taken a Chop House approach to the menu selections. Perhaps a bit eclectic in the menu's selections, touches have been incorporated of almost every corner of American cooking. Some of his signature dishes are perfect examples of this diversity. The best definition of his cuisine would be American Regional. We call it an absolute must try.

You know our dining experience would not be complete without a full report on the dessert selections. Hooray for us that another guest joined us at the end of our meal- one more dessert to sample! Our late arrival guest Jennifer wasn't shy and promptly ordered the Crunch Berry Cheesecake, creamy and full of pureed fruit, topped with a breakfast cereal favorite. Maybe the Chocolate Monolith is more of your passion, a six inch high obelisk of deep chocolate cake and decadent icing on a raspberry pool. And of course, Pie and Ice Cream is always a favorite and their Rustic Tart full of Amaretto and Peaches is wonderful while complimented with a scoop of French Vanilla Ice cream. We actually fought over this one! Sassy Marie's has an in house Pastry Chef Jordan Gottlieb. His creations are the perfect end to a perfect meal.

Sassy Marie's located at where Foreland meets James



Street on Pittsburgh's Historic North Side. They are open for Brunch- Sundays 11am-3pm, Lunch- 11 am to 4 pm Monday to Thursday, Dinner- 5 pm to 10 pm Monday to Friday, 5 pm to 12 am Friday and Saturday and 4 pm to 10 pm Sunday. Happy Hour on weekdays is from 5 to 7 pm and they host Friday and Saturday Late Night Appy Hour (half-price appetizers) starting at 11 pm 'til ?. The Speakeasy at Sassy Marie's which is located downstairs hosts live shows every Friday and Saturday at 9 o'clock. Fridays will be primarily devoted to Jazz, and Saturdays to an eclectic mix. There is a \$5 cover. Their friends in the Burgh's Jazz community are extremely excited to hear the old gal come alive again. Make sure you check out their entertainment schedule, which hosts upcoming shows including Shawnee Lake, The Phoenix Jazz Project, The Erin Burkett Trio, Jessica Lee and Pittsburgh Jazz icon Al Dowe.

Check out their website for more details www.sassy-maries.com. This joint is cool man, just like the jazz.

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