

## Make a bite, take a bite

### Koski's Eggplant Caponata

- 1 large eggplant
- 3 cups fresh or canned tomatoes
- 4 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 4 to 8 cloves garlic
- 1 small onion
- 5 teaspoons dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- Assorted Italian herbs
- Salt and pepper to taste



"I first tried this dish in a sidewalk café in Little Italy in New York City. The moment I tasted it, I had to have the recipe. I searched with little luck, so here is my own version. The best part? I can get the ingredients at Kirksville's local farmer's market."

Coarsely chop tomatoes. Chop eggplant into 1/2 inch cubes with skin on, and set aside with tomatoes. Crush and coarsely chop garlic and onion and sauté in a large pan with olive oil. When the onions are translucent, add eggplant, tomatoes and remaining ingredients. Simmer covered for about 15 minutes stirring frequently until the eggplant is tender. Serve hot tossed with pasta or cold on toast. Makes 4 to 6 servings. Enjoy!

Source: Lindsay Koski

## Comfort foods, fast and healthy

### Peanut Chip Apple Crumble

- 4 medium cored, peeled and sliced cooking apples
- 1/3 cup peanut butter-flavored chips
- 1/2 cup Land O' Lakes Fat Free Half & Half
- 1/2 cup plus 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup Quick Quaker Oats
- 1/4 cup Splenda Granular Sweetener
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons light margarine
- 3 tablespoons Skippy reduced-fat peanut butter



Spray a microwave-safe 8-by-8-inch baking dish with butter-flavored cooking spray. Evenly arrange apple slices in prepared baking dish. In a 2-cup microwave-safe measuring cup, combine peanut butter chips and half & half. Microwave on high for 60 seconds or until mixture is smooth, stirring every 20 seconds. Drizzle mixture evenly over apples. In a large bowl, combine flour, oats and Splenda and cinnamon. Add margarine and peanut butter. Mix well using a pastry blender or two forks until mixture becomes crumbly. Sprinkle crumb mixture evenly over apples. Lightly spray top with butter-flavored cooking spray. Microwave on high for 10 to 12 minutes or until apples are tender. Place baking dish on counter and let set for 5 minutes. Divide into 6 servings.

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Source: Healthy Exchanges

# New restaurant kicks Kirksville up a notch with Cajun cuisine

John Priest  
Assistant Features Editor

The garlicky, set-your-mouth-on-fire goodness of Cajun cooking has landed in Kirksville.

Chevalier's Salamander Grill, a Cajun-inspired restaurant that recently moved to Kirksville from Hartsburg, Mo., opened June 12, with a menu unlike any other in town. Owners Jon and Rhonda Chevalier serve southern decadence with a side of spice on their 130-item menu.

"I don't think anyone will get tired of eating here," said Jon Chevalier, who is a fourth-generation chef. "If you don't have to lick your fingers, it's not Cajun food."

I arrived at Salamander Grill full of anticipation. Cajun food, especially the finger-licking variety, fascinates me. Cajun food is hot. Cajun food is like if you took French food and invited it to a raucous Mardi Gras party with beads and topless women. It's zesty. Zippy. Mischievous. Fun.

Cajun food first met my palate when I traveled to the Gulf Coast in 2004. Everywhere I stopped, the earthy flavors of local crawfish, shrimp and fish attacked my senses in a culinary combustion. With one hand wiping the sweat from my brow, I used the other to shovel a host of exotic foods and flavors in my mouth.

My expectations were high when I first went to the Salamander Grill. Not only did I see it as the diversification of Kirksville's restaurant community, but I also craved the food I'd eaten in New Orleans. I brought along a Cajun food virgin for good measure, and for the most part, we both left satisfied.

The night began with drinks and an appetizer of fried alligator tail. The alligator, with a texture somewhere between chicken and Chilean sea bass, was just-out-of-the-fryer hot and dusted nicely with Cajun spices. The corn bread batter obscured the flavor of the meat. I would have used flour.

We ordered from the cheaper options of the menu, knowing that most students would visit wanting budget-friendly fare. With draft beer and good company to make the time fly, our entrees arrived after only a few minutes. I ordered an oyster po'boy (\$8.99), which is a toasted sandwich stuffed with fried oysters, tomato, lettuce and special sauce, with a side of fire-roasted Mediterranean vegetables and corn on the cob. The oysters were plump, perfectly



John Priest/Index  
Chevalier's Salamander Grill opened June 12, featuring a twist on traditional Cajun fare. Italian and Cajun cuisines collide in the best-selling dish, the Cajun shrimp Creole pasta, above.

breaded and fried to that special place where juicy meets chewy. The vegetables were a little overdone but not cooked beyond recognition, and the sweet corn

melted in my mouth as its buttery juices squirted across the table into my friend's lap. Serves her right. She, not gutsy enough to step outside her comfort zone, ordered the crispy chicken sandwich (\$7.99).

"There's actually chicken in here," she said with her mouth full.

Dusted in Cajun spices and dredged in flour, the chicken breast was moist and plump. She couldn't complain.

Satisfied but not yet stuffed to the point of discomfort, we pushed our empty plates aside and ordered dessert, crème brûlée and Jeff Davis Pie (both \$3.99).

My friend cracked the caramelized crust of the crème brûlée — just like she'd seen in the movie "Amélie" — and

**Restaurant Review**  
**Chevalier's Salamander Grill**  
2523 S. Franklin St., 660-665-5499.  
Seven days a week, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.  
Entrées from \$5 to \$23 at dinner  
Opened June 12



the moment the spoon hit her mouth, a gentle moan escaped her lips. The smooth, creamy texture of the dessert combined with the cool, sugary undertones to make a sinful indulgence that left us fighting over the spoon.

The Jeff Davis Pie (think custard with a crust) also was good but didn't quite compare to the crème brûlée.

Friends have told me they haven't been impressed with Salamander Grill's food or service, but I've eaten there three times and haven't left unsatisfied.

I can vouch that the charbroiled

shrimp is seasoned to perfection (\$15.99), and the Cajun shrimp Creole pasta (\$12.99) is the perfect fusion of Cajun and Italian foods.

I can't wait to try the more traditional fare, especially the Chevaliers' version of gumbo and jambalaya.

For Kirksville, Salamander Grill is dandy. The Salamander Grill is a culinary passport to the Gulf Coast.

The food might not impress some Cajun purists, but I think if you like medium-spicy (never burning hot) food, you'll enjoy it.



## Mr. Foodie

**Q.** How can I enjoy dessert and eat healthfully? Everything seems so fattening.

**A.** Healthful dessert exists at all restaurants. Dessert should be sugary and fattening. Trying to eat a "healthful" dessert made from nonfat things is a misuse of the word "healthful." It's healthy to eat any food in moderation (as long as it's not poisonous). Portion control is your best buddy. Say it with me now — "portion control." Ergo, panna cotta with blueberries shared with your date is better than eating a slice of fried cheesecake. That said, if you must have an engineered dessert, go to your grocery store and try Weight Watchers Giant Cookies 'n Cream ice cream bars. They have only 140 calories and five grams of fat. The best part is that they taste just like an Oreo Blizzard. This message was brought to you by Personal Responsibility.  
— John Priest

If you have a question for Mr. Foodie, please send an e-mail to [mr.foodie@gmail.com](mailto:mr.foodie@gmail.com)

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