



Tom Venis, the new owner of Peddler's Alley in Waterville, and Ferd Seipel, returning manager/consultant of Smedlap's Smithy restaurant, re-opened the restaurant on May 1.



Smedlap's Smithy restaurant, located in Peddler's Alley, Waterville, returns to a new menu of old favorites.

MIRROR PHOTOS BY BECKY JACOBS

# Everything Old Is New Again At Smedlap's Smithy

BY BECKY JACOBS  
MIRROR REPORTER

Waterville locals are again making a happy trek to Smedlap's Smithy restaurant in Peddler's Alley.

It may be from enticing aromas wafting through the alley of shops, or perhaps from happy sounds within.

Both are good reasons, but as Paul Harvey would say: "What is the rest of the story?"

Diners are pleasantly surprised to be warmly welcomed by returning manager/consultant Ferd Seipel. It is like a step back in time — a good time.

The old smithy shop has been a unique eating and drinking establishment for many years, but for a time the restaurant menu and décor did tend to change.

Seipel promises he will restore the old atmosphere.

In recent weeks he has decorated the entry with various antiques, which are joined by a stuffed Buffalo head and a full-sized Native American statue.

These are especially significant to the restaurant, which displays a large buffalo statue at its entrance. The restaurant also offers buffalo meat on the menu.

Working alongside Seipel is the new owner of Peddler's Alley, Tom Venis, of Bowling Green, who strives to please returning customers.

Venis purchased the alley and its arcade of small shops in April, and has successfully filled most of the shops.

Both Venis and Seipel showed their excitement at the thought of returning the uniqueness to Smedlap's Smithy restaurant, not only in its diversified food choice, but with its décor.

They agreed that sometimes it is good to take a step back to the "old" to find what has been missing.

Smedlap's Smithy is more than a restaurant, more than an eating and drinking establishment: It was and will continue to be a downtown Waterville tradition.

Through the years, cus-



Nick Seipel, kitchen manager at Smedlap's Smithy, prepares the restaurant's signature prime rib.

tomers were used to Seipel and his wife Jan with their combined business expertise.

It was a place where customers were acquainted with the younger Seipel family members as they rose through the ranks in the family business.

Grandson Nick Seipel, who began working at Smedlap's at age 17, has now returned as its new kitchen manager. His brother Zak will get his start as head dishwasher.

Nick has continued to gain experience as a chef in other area restaurants, which he intends to share within this familiar background.

However, Nick said, the restaurant will continue to

offer the familiar, such as plank fish and steak along with the restaurant's signature prime rib.

"We will also be improving on more fish dishes," he said.

Ferd Seipel pointed out the daily specials on the menu. They include barbecued spare ribs on Monday; all-you-can-eat fish on Tuesday; Mexican night on Wednesday, including tacos for \$1.00 and special margaritas; and home-style night on Thursday, which includes pot roast or meatloaf.

Seipel shared a walk through the restaurant as he spoke of the extensive refurbishing project still under way.

The décor was last on the long "to do" project list. The restaurant has been complete-

ly cleaned prior to adding antique wall hangings. Many older pieces have returned along with newspaper front pages of the past.

Other additions include new carpet, hardwood flooring and new window coverings made by Jan Seipel.

Ferd Seipel said the former interior window shutters are long since gone, but attractive wood fencing offers a rustic decorative touch.

The twinkling white lights high above diners' heads only add to the restaurant's charm.

"It has been hard, hands-on work," Seipel said, "but we are ready."

Since the restaurant's open-

ing on May 1, Seipel said he has seen more and more returning customers and a generally good response.

The upstairs loft is still open to private parties, and reservations are accepted for parties and dinner.

And, the winding slide from the second floor is still in operation.

The slide was installed by former owner Don Buckhout, who established the restaurant in the 1970s.

He had formerly owned and operated the old Plantation Inn.

Buckhout restored the brick-walled, timber-lined smithy shop and named the restaurant in honor of Smedlap Effingtass.

Buckhout claimed he was a distant relative to Effingtass, who built the smithy shop in 1793. Effingtass married Quindora Metzberger, daughter of the village blacksmith, and later operated the shop.

Buckhout was known for his fun-loving spirit and his tongue-in-cheek tales.

As one looks around the restaurant, many of his signature items remain like lingering memories.

Smedlap's Smithy, located at 205 Farnsworth Rd. in Waterville, is open Monday through Thursday from 11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., and Friday and Saturday from 11:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

The phone number is (419) 878-0261.

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