

MORRIS Saturday!

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2007



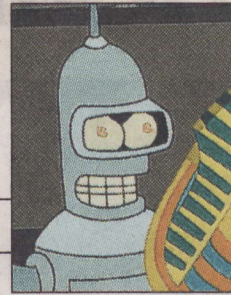
DAWN BENKO / DAILY RECORD

Tony and Anthony Sibona, owners of Hot Rods Real Pit BBQ, pose with their daughter, Ava, at the downtown Wharton restaurant.

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CK FROM THE PAST

TV show 'Futurama' returns straight-to-DVD movie, 'Futurama: Bender's Big Score!' Page D6.



Puzzles / D2
Comics / D4
Entertainment / D5
Television / D6

SECTION

D

EAT

Catering turned into Hot Rods Real Pit BBQ

BY JANET ERWOOD

SPECIAL TO THE DAILY RECORD

WHARTON — An all-American barbecue and hot rod cars are the theme at Hot Rods Real Pit BBQ. Located downtown on Main Street, the restaurant prides itself on the motto of being the Northeast's answer to a real Texas barbecue with a Yankee flair.

"Before we opened the restaurant we knew what kind of theme we wanted the restaurant to have," said Anthony Sibona, co-owner with wife Toby. "Toby and I researched and we wanted to take the real down-home Texas barbecue and give it an avant-garde flair. We took the best of all the American food we found and made it special for the northeast metropolitan area."

Barbecuing for Sibona began 10 years ago, when he began catering backyard pig roast parties. He started out doing it for a friend and then the idea took off. People began to ask him to cater the pig roast for all types of backyard parties, and the demand for the parties grew.

HOT RODS / D3

HOT RODS REAL PIT BBQ

19 N. Main St., Wharton
Call (973) 368-5050

Hours: Tuesday-Thursday 11 a.m.-10 p.m. — bar until midnight; Friday 11 a.m.-10:30 p.m. — bar until 1:30 a.m.; Saturday 3-10:30 p.m. — bar until 1:30 a.m.; Sunday 12:30-10 p.m. — bar until midnight

Cuisine: BBQ and all-American
Liquor: Yes

Payment: Cash and credit cards

Price: Lunch \$6.99 express lunch special platters; same lunch and dinner menu, \$6.29-\$25.95

Reservations: Not required
Dress: Casual

Atmosphere: Open and airy bar area upon entering, two cheery dining rooms

The scene: Hot rod cars and custom car photos, and real motorcycle parts, cover the walls, along with flame-trimmed wallpaper suggestive of a BBQ pit.

Special Events and Themes: Yes

Catering: Yes

Takeout: Yes

Parking: On Main Street

Owners: Toby and Anthony Sibona

Hot Rods

CONTINUED FROM / D1

He and Toby decided, after 10 years of doing the backyard pig roasts, it was time to open a barbecue style restaurant.

"We both love the BBQ and we love hot rod cars, so it was easy to know exactly what was going into the restaurant," the Sibonas said.

Because two-thirds of the menu consists of barbecued and smoked items, the kitchen houses one regular size and one very large full-wall size smoker to keep up with the demand. Two of the most popular items are the barbecued ribs and the pulled pork.

"I had to invest in the larger smoker not too long after we first opened because the demand for these orders was more than the smaller smoker could handle, not only for just the menu items but also the demand for catering," Anthony said. "Many times we ran out of the barbecued ribs and pulled pork at dinner, and we didn't want to continue to disappoint our customers."

Sibona explained that sometimes it takes as long as 14 to 16 hours for some of the meat items such as the pulled pork to smoke. Because of the time it takes to prepare the food, many of the dishes cannot be made quickly when they run out of them.

For those who may not want to do a barbecue, the menu has many other non-barbecue selections available. Jambalaya, grilled shrimp, burritos, quesadillas, meatloaf, chicken specialties, hamburgers, wraps, and sandwiches are some of the other available selections. About six monthly chef specials are also part of the menu.

The spice bucket, filled with specialty hot sauces, ranging in heat intensity from one through 10, also accompanies many of the dishes. But be careful: The 10 comes with a warning label.

Catering is also a very busy entity at Hot Rods. According to Anthony, they now cater many corporate functions, events, picnics and even weddings.

"I can't believe how many people really like the whole barbecue theme," Anthony said.

Hot Rods also is host to special theme nights such as wine and beer tastings that are coupled with food samplings. The tastings always feature many local area wineries and breweries.

A great meeting place, the wide and spacious front bar also plays host to diners and non diners alike. The tap beer at the bar is always a local or regional craft beer, Anthony said.



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Hot Rods Real Pit BBQ in Wharton has two smokers to take care of the demand for the restaurant's barbecued spare ribs and pulled pork, which can take as long as 14-16 hours to smoke.