

New Orleans City BUSINESS

M DOLAN MEDIA
COMPANY

THE BUSINESS NEWSPAPER OF METRO NEW ORLEANS

FEBRUARY 9, 2009

Dining Out

Annadele's off beaten path but on many diners' radars

BY Tom Fitzmorris
Restaurant Writer

OUT OF SIGHT, OUT OF MIND. That's a formula that has taken down many good New Orleans restaurants over the years. I kept worrying about Annadele's in that regard, but there seems to have been no need.

The last two visits I made there had full dining rooms.

The kitchen is very much up to this

growing business and continues to improve its offerings on ever visit.

Unlike La Provence and Dakota, who go after the same kind of business Annadele's does, the menu here is so retro as to seem genteel. It's perfect for the premises, which are stunning.

The only challenge is finding it. "Turn off Causeway Boulevard a block past the Popeyes" is not a seemly direction but is the most accurate.

Annadele's Plantation \$\$\$\$\$

Classic Creole

71495 Chestnut St., Covington
(985) 809-7669

Lunch Thursday through Friday.
Dinner Tuesday through Saturday.
Brunch Sunday.

www.annadeles.com

Price ratings are what one person should expect to spend on a meal. Each \$ represents roughly \$10

Why it's essential

A handsome mansion dating back to the 1830s, the setting of Annadele's is comparable to what you'd find in a River Road plantation house, complete with expansive, well-planted grounds. The pleasant surprise is that the food is some of the best on the North Shore.

Surroundings

The most scenic dining room by far is the brick-walled Garden Room, which has windows giving out onto the grounds on three walls. The other rooms are pleasant enough in an antique way but don't have the same allure. Annadele's is full of private rooms, including a very pleasant one for a small party in the wine cellar. The service staff is mostly young, but the presence of a couple of long-time pros lends smoothness. The bar has live music some weekend nights.

Essential dishes

Crab cakes; oysters Monrepos (Rockefeller and Bienville); seafood cheesecake; turtle soup; Gulf fish meuniere; Gulf fish Gabrielle (beurre blanc and shrimp); filet mignon or sirloin strip steak; mixed grill (two quail, two lamb chops); chocolate soup (dessert, for chocoholics only); bread pudding; creme brulee.

For best results

It once was possible to walk into this restaurant and get a table, but no more. Reservations on weekends are essential.

Why it's good

This is a menu from the early 1980s, a great time for New Orleans food. It's distinctly Creole in its flavors and ingredients, and cooked with enough skill that it's hard to complain about the familiarity of all the dishes. In fact, the cooking here has improved with each of my four visits during the past year. The quality of the groceries shows in critical items such as lamb chops, quail, steak and fish — all fresh and of high intrinsic merit. The antique dining rooms, surrounded by the lovely grounds, are perfect for this kind of dining.

Room to improve

The dining rooms off the main hall are a bit noisy and could use redecorating.

Factors other than food

Up to three points, positive or negative, for these characteristics. Absence of points denotes average performance in the matter.

Dining environment +2	Attitude +1
Service +1	Wine and bar
Consistency +1	Hipness -1
Value +1	Local color +3

Special attributes

Live music; romantic; windows with a view; good for children and business meetings; private dining rooms for less than 25 and more than 25; open Sundays; historic; unusually large servings; easy, nearby parking; reservations accepted; reservations honored promptly

Back story

Parts of the house — originally called Monrepos — predate the Civil War. When Covington became the center of things, the main roads passed Monrepos by and left it isolated in an invisible corner of the Bogue Falaya River. Under the name Annadele, it became a restaurant in the 1980s. It didn't work out and remained closed for a long time in the 1990s. After a long-running controversy, it opened as a restaurant and bed-and-breakfast under the aegis of Pat Gallagher, a well-known name in North Shore cooking in those days. Gallagher didn't stay long-term. New investors came in just before Katrina and have improved the restaurant ever since.



Executive Chef Ronald Bonnette prepares Savory Cheesecake St. Tammany in the wine tasting room at Annadele's Plantation in Covington.

RESTAURANT RATING



Restaurants are rated on a five-star scale.