

Q&A With Chef Ryan Cunningham of Abbott's on Broad Creek

When you think about dining on the water, Laurel isn't normally the first place that comes to mind. But Chef Ryan Cunningham is working hard to put Abbott's on Broad Creek on the map. Located in downtown Laurel, the young restaurant has had a busy year-and-a-half since its opening in December of 2013. Abbott's had already made a name for itself with Abbott's Grill in Milford, but bringing people to a new location was a welcome challenge for Chef Ryan.

Q: What do you think draws people to Abbott's Grill?

A: We take familiar things and put our own twist on them, and wow people that way. Once you hook people, they'll try anything.

Q: What's the biggest challenge you've encountered so far in this location?

A: Getting people out of the "has-to-be-this-way" mentality, and getting people to lose the expensive idea too—because we're not expensive at all. We want to have something for everybody.

Q: What's the most popular item on your menu?

A: Either the chicken livers or the frog legs—those are the kinds of things we like to do here. We don't really keep anything on our menu that isn't selling. We change around our menu anywhere from eight to 12 times a year.

Q: What makes you one of the most popular restaurants in the area?

A: We're giving our all, all the time, to make the customers happy. We're not here to make a ton of money and we're not here to just go through the motions. We're here to provide a service and strive for excellence all the time. We also use a lot of local ingredients and vendors. That's what it's all about, locals helping locals; supporting each other. That's how you build a strong community and that's what we're trying to do here.

Q: What does buying locally mean for the quality of your food?

A: You know where it's coming from. You know it was picked today or yesterday, not just left sitting in a truck somewhere for God knows how long. It's really nice to work with such natural ingredients.

Q: If you could tell readers one thing, what would it be?

A: Come see what it's like to have people that really care cook dinner for you. We put so much love, time, and energy into what we do and really stand behind it.

Abbott's is buzzing with features every night, specialty events, live music, community benefits and "tap takeovers," when local breweries team up with Abbott's and sell their craft beers at the bar. Chef Ryan is hopeful that Abbott's on Broad Creek will continue to be successful, and also hopes it will be the first of many new businesses to open in Laurel.