

Bill of Fare: The Brothers Moon emphasizes use of local ingredients

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By [Susan Sprague Yeske / For The Times](#)

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Will Mooney, co-owner and executive chef of the Brothers Moon in Hopewell, offers a serving of mushroom risotto and brown butter sautéed jumbo scallops. *Martin Griff/The Times*

“We have another month left for corn, and possibly longer than that for tomatoes,” says Will Mooney, chef and owner of the Brothers Moon in Hopewell Borough. There’s also summer squash, beets, berries, lettuces and other greens.

Mooney easily ticks off a list of local produce that’s currently available and can be found on the menus of the restaurant he has owned for the past dozen years.

From the beginning, and long before it was trendy, the award-winning chef has gone out of his way to buy ingredients that are as fresh and local as possible. He also is among the most successful in the area

at using local ingredients year round.

“We are still and always have been closely tied with the farmers,” he says.

That dedication, plus his delight in the changing of the seasons and the wealth of fresh produce each change brings, have earned him a loyal following. Loyalty also extends to his staff. Some have been with him for years.

Because of his reliance on what’s local and available, his menu is both stable and ever-changing. There is a main menu, plus daily specials, and when we visited we tried dishes from both. He calls his food Healthy New American, and he offers upscale versions of basics such as steak and roast chicken and homespun dishes such as soups and mac and cheese.

Mooney’s chunky Jersey tomato soup, \$8, is a current staple and should remain on the menu while tomatoes are in season. An ample bowl, it is rich with deep tomato flavor and topped with a swirl of basil and pine nut pesto.

A Belgian endive salad, \$10, was a delightful serving of pale green endive, chunks of seasonal local beets, a crumble of local feta cheese and toasted hazelnuts finished with a light but tangy citrus dressing. With its crunch and freshness, this was a very nicely done salad.

From among the entrees we sampled the jumbo sea scallops, \$28, which were served dusted in cornmeal, perfectly seared and warmed clear through. With their rich flavor, they were among the best we’ve tasted. Sharing the plate were grilled seasonal summer squash, quinoa pilaf flavored with local sweet corn and a tomatillo salsa.

A tender grilled filet, \$24, was cooked to the requested medium-well done, finished with a mildly zippy Romesco sauce and served with whipped local mashed potatoes, grilled asparagus and a spoonful of red onion salad. This flavorful meal was hearty and filling for any steak fan.

A moist yet crispy chicken breast, \$25, came from nearby Griggstown Farm, and it was nicely roasted to retain its tenderness and flavor. A side dish of the chef’s own macaroni and cheese was good, but the four cheeses it contained didn’t assert themselves. A side of ratatouille featured the season’s current best produce, while a roasted tomato vinaigrette finished the dish.

Brothers Moon has a pastry chef on staff, and there is always the option of asking for something from the bakery takeout case at the front of the restaurant. We chose to order from the menu and sampled a hazelnut brown butter cake and seasonal peach buckle, \$8 each.

The buttery cake was dense and moist with a thin coating of chocolate Nutella on top and a side scoop of good vanilla ice cream. But the favorite was the buckle, made with local peaches and a lovely dough base that held the moist, fragrant peaches and their sweet juice.

Mooney is an experienced chef who knows what he likes, what his customers want and how best to prepare it. On his diverse but locally oriented menu, there is always something that beckons the diner to take a taste. He should be crafting his version of Healthy New American for many years to come.

The Brothers Moon

7 W. Broad St., Hopewell

(609) 333-1330, brothersmoon.com

HOURS: Lunch 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Tues.-Fri.; dinner 5-9 p.m. Tues.-Thurs., 5-9:30 p.m. Fri.-Sat., 4-8 p.m. Sun.; brunch 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Closed Monday.

CREDIT CARDS: Most major.

FOOD: This very good to excellent menu is prepared with care and insight on the best use of local ingredients in season.

SERVICE: Pleasant and attentive.

AMBIENCE: In this casually elegant bistro, the tablecloths are covered with practical white butcher's paper paired with cloth napkins. The artistically draped dining room is separated from a take-out area dominated by a long case filled with salads, entrees and baked goods.

COST: Appetizers \$7-\$12, entrees \$13-\$31. Lunch entrees, sandwiches and burgers \$12-\$15.

BYOB