

Posted on Fri, Oct. 28, 2005

Ambler pub with a strong Irish flavor

The Shanachie Irish Pub and Restaurant

111 E. Butler Ave., Ambler,

215-283-4887.

www.shanachiepub.com.

Hours. Lunch: 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily. Dinner: 5 to 10 p.m. daily (late night limited menu 10 to 11 p.m.). Sunday brunch: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Smoking at the bar only

Wheelchair accessible

Reservations accepted

Take-out available

Price range. Appetizers are \$4.25 to \$9.95; sandwiches and main courses are \$6.95 to \$24.95.

Parking. Ambler has metered street parking.

What's the story? Owners Gerry Timlin - a native of County Tyrone and an Irish folksinger - and attorney Ed Egan were longtime friends who often talked about opening their own pub. In October 2004, they opened the Shanachie (pronounced SHAHN-ahh-key), hiring former Sonoma chef (and Food Network host) Brian Duffy to develop a menu that incorporates Irish classics and new dishes built around Celtic ingredients.

The scene. The Shanachie has the best features of a quaint Irish pub, with a long bar and stools separated from the dining room by a wooden half-wall. The hunter-green dining area boasts wooden tables clustered around a stage where musicians perform Tuesday through Saturday.

What we had. We started our meal with a bubbly hot dip containing crab, roasted garlic and spinach that tasted perfect with the accompanying brown bread, carrots and celery (\$8.95). My companion ordered the seafood special - delectable shrimp, scallops and calamari stir-fried in a light tomato cream sauce (\$17.95). I went for classic comfort food - a succulent cottage pie featuring creamy chicken and vegetables in a puff pastry (\$15.95). The accompanying mashed potatoes were studded with green onions and chives (Shanachie offers a choice of seven specialty potatoes with most entrees). We finished with a dense chocolate cake (\$5.25) that caused my companion to exclaim, "This is beyond chocolate - it's trufflicious!"

Chef's suggestions. Shanachie means "storyteller" in Gaelic, so Duffy has his menu divided into "chapters." He recommends a "bruschetta" appetizer that places jumbo lump crab and wild mushrooms atop fried sourdough bread and tomato fillets (\$9.95). The Kinsale mussels, steamed in a leek-infused wine broth (\$8.95), and classic fish and chips (\$14.95) are also worth a look.

Nice touches. On a recent Wednesday night, the waitress handed out a Quizzo sheet to help us pass time after our meal (alas, we couldn't make it out of third place). Traditional Irish jam sessions are held Tuesday nights.

After you eat. The Shanachie is on Ambler's revitalized main street, close to shops, the Act II Playhouse, and the restored Ambler Theater.

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