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Eatbeat: Hillsboro Cafe as good as home cooking

By Marilyn Hagerty on Jun 3, 2018 at 4:11 p.m.

23



They met 18 years ago when they both were working for a Perkins restaurant in Fargo.

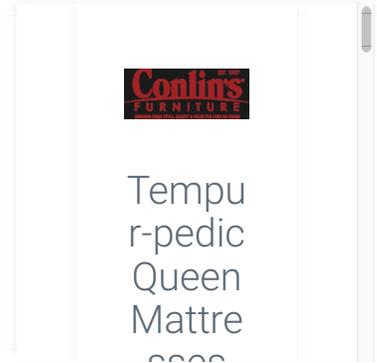
Since October, Derek and Kate Ehnert have been operating the The Hillsboro Café in this town halfway between Grand Forks and Fargo.

With their fresh, wholesome food they are creating a reason to veer off I-29 for breakfast or lunch on weekdays or brunch on Sundays. The food is as good, even better than what most people eat at home. The restaurant is a bright spot along a main street struggling to stay alive.

Once inside on a Monday in May, we found the restaurant with seating for 40 full of lunch customers. They were seated at tables of various shapes and sizes.

With AP (Ann Porter) and JR (Joan Reinhardt), I found a small table. The well designed menu is easy to follow and full of inviting choices. The Club sandwich for \$9 was served between three slices of toasted whole wheat bread. It was filled with sliced ham, turkey and bacon with tomato, lettuce and mayo. And it was one of the best I have tasted. The vegetable beef soup had a freshly made quality. The beef squares were small and lean. The soup comes with a slice of bread for \$3.50 a cup and \$5.25 a bowl.

The menu shows lunch items on the front and breakfast choices on the back. The menu is clear, clean and easy to read. It is printed on one sheet with breakfast on the back and lunch items on front. None of this juggling large, weathered menus that usually are confusing to read. This is a pleasant departure.



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The breakfast classics range from eggs and toast to biscuits and gravy. Choices include buttermilk pancakes, French toast and cranberry wild rice.

Brunch offerings range from toast and waffles to biscuits and gravy. There are a la carte prices for items including eggs Benedict as well as a cheesy hash brown casserole.

The walls of the restaurant are pleasantly decorated with homey pictures and sayings. There are plans to expand the seating area in June in order to keep up with the people clamoring to get in at times.

The proprietors, Kate and Derek Ehnert, have moved around in various restaurants since they met 18 years ago. They have gained experience in different restaurants. They honed their skills as a cook and a server.

Taking over the café that had closed on Main Street of Hillsboro was a move to café ownership for them. She was born in Hillsboro and finished high school there. He originally was from Wadena, Minn.

They have been operating the Hillsboro Café for seven months.

Their problem is not bringing in business. It seems to be keeping up with business. They have a way with hot beef sandwiches and knoephla soup that she says goes like crazy. And Reuben and Rachel sandwiches as well as a Reuben omelet are a draw on Thursdays.

For desserts, customers look to the menu board. That is why AP suggested we taste the apple crisp.

The Hillsboro Café operates with help of six part-time workers. To fill the need for more seating, there are plans to expand into an adjoining area in June.

While it is easy to find when you drive off Interstate 29 to Fargo, the café is close to Highway 81 in downtown Hillsboro. With AP and JR, it was a pleasant drive of 40 miles on Highway 81 from Grand Forks on a quiet highway. The drive gave us a chance to enjoy the fields of green and the black, black earth.

Liver and onions

Eatbeat addendum: Liver and onions are alive and well at area restaurants. After reader Corky Haugen asked, the Eatbeat has heard from Chad Erdmann who says you can find liver and onions at Irishman's Shanty and the Crookston Inn. Another caller from Grandma Butterwick's on South Washington Street assures the Eatbeat they turn out liver and onions all the time.

The Hillsboro Café

3 N. Main Street, Hillsboro, N.D.

Owner-operators: Derek and Kate Ehnert

Telephone: (701) 636-2073

Hours: 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday, closed Saturday. 1 to 3 p.m. brunch Sunday

Report card: Inviting, unpretentious, homey.

Service was VG (very good). And very friendly. Food like at home, only better.

Reach Marilyn Hagerty at mhagerty@gra.midco.net (mailto:mhagerty@gra.midco.net) or by telephone at (701) 772-1055.

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