

TASTE & TELL: Delicious surprises at Venus II

By Mimi Claffey

For The Patriot Ledger

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MARSHFIELD —

Venus II – 277 Ocean St., Marshfield 781-837-6368; www.venus2.com

Prices: Appetizers \$4-10; entrees \$10.95-\$ 15.95; pizzas, sandwiches \$5.50-\$8.10

Hours: Monday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 1 a.m.; Sunday, noon to 1 a.m.

Credit cards: Visa, MasterCard

Parking: Off-street available

Handicapped access: Yes

When you least expect something to be good and it turns out great, that's always a treat. Upon pulling into a parking space at Venus II in the Brant Rock section of Marshfield and viewing its maze of wooden staircases, decks and ramps, I imagined scores of beachgoers, drinks in hand, music playing over the din, and a restaurant inside producing standard fried foods. It looked like fun here.

In an establishment where one can order a "bucket of beers" from the menu (four bottles of your choice of listed beer served in a bucket covered with ice for \$10.95), we expected that our pending meals would be full of deep fried or fatty grilled delights, and we would leave feeling overstuffed and in desperate need of a trip to the gym. True to form, those items were available and, of course, made it to our table. But so did some surprisingly delicious, nearly epicurean specials that I would return for.

To start, we ordered an appetizer. The regular menu was loaded with standard appetizers such as fried calamari (\$7.95), mozzarella sticks (\$5.95), and boneless Buffalo fingers (\$6.95), but we went for the 12 mini-tacos served with salsa and sour cream from the daily special menu. They were crunchy and fun to eat, but still run-of-the-mill sports bar fare. It was exactly what we had expected and we enjoyed every bite.

What we had not expected were the delicious entrées that followed. Brian loves to get fish and chips and has become very good at comparing batters, portions, and the omnipresent coleslaw side. His take on the fish and chips (\$10.95) at the Venus II? "Nice flaky cod; a good crunchy batter; a decent portion of fish" served with mounds of seasoned French fries and a side of coleslaw that was "crispy and fresh."

We ordered the steak tips (\$13.95), and the unexpected indulgences began. They were perhaps the best steak tips I've ever had. A 12-ounce portion of deliciously marinated steak tips, grilled and smothered with sautéed mushrooms, onions, and peppers, bursting with flavor. Served over flavorful fluffy rice, these steak tips were hypnotizing. I found myself picking up the steak tips with my fingers and popping them into my mouth, as though

they were popcorn and I was mesmerized by a movie on the big screen. Actually, I was mesmerized by the small screen. Venus II has 10 flat-screen TVs in the lounge and Keno.

After the horror of realizing that I was eating with my hands in public, I returned to the other main dish at our table. Yet another mouth-watering treat, the "signature dish" of the Venus II, is the crab-stuffed haddock (\$10.95). This was positively tasty. Served in a casserole dish and baked with Monterey jack cheese bubbling on top, this dish was loaded with flavorful seafood. The stuffing had a very rich, moist texture, yet it was nearly indiscernible because of the abundance of fish and cheese. The large pieces of haddock were tender, with a slight lemon and dill flavor. Real mashed potatoes (hooray!) and a side of boiled, peeled baby carrots, which were also tender and not overcooked, accompanied the dish. We were very pleased with this meal.

The Venus II has about 20 other entrées on its menu, ranging from shrimp ravioli royale (\$11.95) to three kinds of fajitas (\$11.95 for shrimp or chicken, \$12.95 for steak). There are also many choices of pasta with sauces, meatballs, or sausages (\$5.95 – \$9.95) and several burgers and sandwiches. A B.L.T. is \$6.95, a Black Angus bacon cheeseburger is \$7.95.

There is also the pizza. ... Over the next few days, while discussing restaurants with friends, I learned that pizza is what Venus I, located in Whitman, and Venus II are known for. They have that thin, crispy bar-style pizza, available with lots of tasty toppings, and oily cheese dripping from a tangy tomato sauce. My next trip to Brant Rock will certainly include a stop for pizza from Venus II. I'm so happy I have so many reasons to go back.

The weekly restaurant review, "Taste & Tell," is written after anonymous visits to area restaurants by Patriot Ledger food critics Christine Ordway, Mimi Claffey and Jen Wagner.

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