

Metro Lafayette a Welcome Addition

By Lee Borrowman

One of my favorite summer pleasures is dining al fresco. Lafayette, rapidly becoming Lamorinda's own "gourmet ghetto," is now home to the new Metro Lafayette; another perfect spot at which to indulge in culinary delights on a balmy summer evening. Owner Jack Moore and Chef Mark Lusardi both come with impressive credentials, and their experience is evident in every aspect of their newest venture.

The location at 3524 Mt. Diablo Blvd. has housed other restaurants in the past, and boasts a wonderful patio. What was I thinking bringing three children with me on my first visit to this potential summer home away from home? Well, to be totally honest, it was, "If I bring them all, I can taste more things!" And besides, if I'm going to write about it I should find out if it's kid-friendly; after all, families do occasionally need to eat at restaurants that don't have Play Places. We went early, shortly after 5:00 on a Friday night.



Happy al fresco diners

and heaters provide additional comfort when needed. At 5:30, there was one other family dining nearby but most of the guests were of the adult variety and the venue filled up as the evening wore on.



Our server, Whitney, did not flinch at the sight of a lone mom clearly outnumbered by the shorter set. She was friendly, knowledgeable and efficient, laughed at our jokes, and gave us just the right amount of attention. Much to our delight, Moore came over and chatted with us briefly, acknowledging his own status as a local parent of school-aged children and offering my kids and their friend a lesson on the appropriate use of a butter knife.

Service was attentive and non-intrusive.

It would not be fair or professional for anyone to review a restaurant after only one visit, but I can't resist a few words about the food. We began our meal with a sublime oyster sampler from the raw bar, which was beautifully iced and presented, a Caesar salad and a pair of Peekytoe crab cakes; the crab cakes in particular had a lovely fresh flavor and texture. Moving on to the entrees, the Misoyaki Black Cod with scallion rice cake, tempura mushrooms and living cress with ponzu, one of Lusardi's signature dishes, was very well executed. The black cod had the anticipated sweet crust on the outside and melted in the mouth. The kids devoured a Niman Ranch burger, Croque Monsieur and Niman Ranch dry-aged New York steak without complaint. I was allowed tastes of the steak and the smoky, salty open-faced sandwich and found both satisfactory; the burger disappeared from its plate before I could even reach for it. All three were served with a generous portion of crisp, nicely cut skin-on French fries. Although not on the menu, plain pasta is also available for the youngest crowd.

If you're unsure which wine to select from the interesting list, don't hesitate to ask. Moore, a master sommelier candidate, is happy to make a recommendation. The Sylvaner he sent over paired exquisitely with the black cod, and he paid us a return visit to make sure all was well. Finally, when you go, don't skip dessert. A Meyer lemon cheesecake with to-die-for lemon curd, a not-too-sweet peach-apricot-almond crisp with vanilla gelato and a cornmeal cake with fresh berries all graced our table and the subsequent sighs of delight postponed the inevitable ice cube fight until we were nearly ready to depart.

For more information: <http://www.metrolafayette.com/> or 925-284-4422.

Pork Ribs on the grill – The Advanced Class

By Dan Leff

Every summer, plenty of people cook pork ribs on the grill. And at the end of each summer, an undetermined number of people walk away from their grills thinking, "Those ribs came out dry and tough. Next time I'll just go to the local BBQ joint!" Rest easy, there is a way to cook pork ribs on the grill and have them come out tender and juicy.

Please note that this recipe does NOT feature precise, scientific quantities and measurements. Your eyes and instincts will serve as the best judges here.

Smoke-braised pork ribs

Ingredients:

- 1 rack of pork ribs
- Orange Juice
- Soy Sauce
- Chicken Stock
- Good quality hardwood charcoal (Lazzari's is the best)
- Wood chips for smoking

Equipment:

- A large (kettle-type) barbecue grill (that little "Smoky Joe" won't work)
- A 2"-3" deep aluminum half-pan (the kind used for small roasts – don't use the long pans)
- A long, heavy-duty grill spatula
- A long, sturdy pair of metal tongs
- An oven mitt

To prepare:

1. Place the wood chips in a large bowl. Cover with the liquid of your choice; water's fine, but apple cider mixed with Calvados will give you the best flavor to your ribs, in the end.
2. Put the ribs in a large bowl. Cover them with a mixture of Orange Juice, Soy Sauce and Chicken stock. For more interesting and complex flavor, put in 1-2 cloves of Star Anise, 3-4 dried chilies or some garlic cloves. Let the ribs marinate for about 1 hour (at room temperature) or 2-4 hours under refrigeration.
3. Start the coals on the outdoor grill. This recipe does require a medium-large amount of charcoal. Starting the coals by using a chimney-type lighter is preferable to dousing them with lighter fluid. The coals will be ready to use when they are almost all white.
4. When the coals are ready, drain off the liquid from the smoking chips. Keep the smoking chips handy and ready-to-go for the next couple of steps.
5. Remove the pork ribs from the marinade to a plate



About Chef Dan Leff...

After graduating from the California Culinary Academy in 1995, I've worked in venues around the Bay Area. Having worked with Bradley Ogden at the Lark Creek Inn, I specialize in Classic American cuisine, using seasonal ingredients, with a fine dining emphasis.

Chef Dan Leff Catering focuses on intimate, elegant sit-down dinners and small corporate events. <http://www.chefdanleff.com>



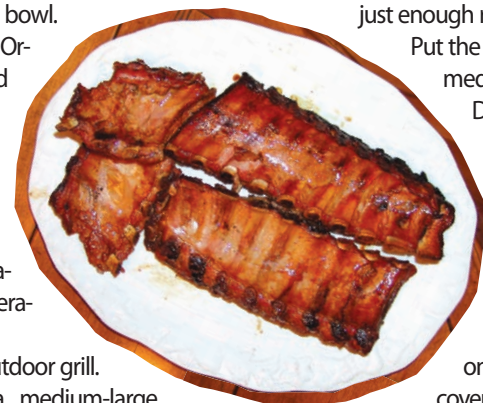
or other vessel. Keep the marinade handy, you'll need to use it fast in the step below...

6. WORKING QUICKLY AND CAREFULLY put on that oven mitt and divide the hot coals into 2 equal piles pushed to the sides of the grill bottom. There should be just enough room for that aluminum half pan.

Put the half pan into that space, and immediately pour in the marinade. DON'T POUR IN THE MARINADE ALL THE WAY TO THE TOP – leave about 1" of space. Put the ribs into the pan with the marinade, immediately.

7. Have the lid to the grill handy. Sprinkle the soaked/drained smoking chips onto the hot coals. Immediately cover the grill with the lid. Have ALL the air vents (on the bottom of the grill, and in the lid) WIDE OPEN.

8. The ribs will braise in the marinating liquid and absorb the smoky flavor of the wood chips. Add more marinade to the pan as it evaporates. The ribs will take about 1 to 1-1/2 hours to cook. When they are done, they will be very tender and have an amazing taste! Remove them carefully with the long tongs when they are ready.



This recipe is available on our web site. Go to: <http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/html/read.html>

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LAMORINDA WEEKLY

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LAMORINDA's Restaurants		
American		
Bistro	3287 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	283-7108
Chow Restaurant	53 Lafayette Cir, Laf	962-2469
Hungry Hunter	3201 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	938-3938
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Quiznos	3651 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	962-0200
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The Cheese Steak Shop	3455 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	283-1234
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Bo's Barbecue	3422 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	283-7133
Burger Joint		
Flippers	960 Moraga Rd, Laf	284-1567
Nation's Giant Hamburgers	400 Park, Mor	376-8888
Nation's Giant Hamburgers	76 Moraga Way, Ori	254-8888
Café		
Express Cafe	3732 Mt. Diablo Blvd #170, Laf	283-7170
Ferrari-Lucca Delicatessens	23 Lafayette Cir, Laf	299-8040
Geppetto's coffee	87 Orinda Way, Ori	253-9894
California Cuisine		
Metro Lafayette	3524 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	284-4422
Caribbean		
Calyppo Bar & Grill	2 Theatre Sq, Suite 153, Ori	258-9686
Chinese		
Chef Chao Restaurant	343 Rheem Blvd, Mor	376-1740
China Moon Restaurant	380 Park St, Mor	376-1828
The Great Wall Restaurant	3500 Golden Gate Way, Laf	284-3500
Hsiangs Mandarin Cuisine	1 Orinda Way # 1, Ori	253-9852
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Mandarin Flower	581 Moraga Rd, Mor	376-7839
Panda Express	3608 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	962-0288
Szechwan Chinese Restaurant	79 Orinda Way, Ori	254-2020
Uncle Yu's Szechuan	999 Oak Hill Rd, Laf	283-1688
Yan's Restaurant	3444 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	284-2228
Coffee Shop		
Millie's Kitchen	1018 Oak Hill Rd #A, Laf	283-2397
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Petar's Restaurant	32 Lafayette Cir, Laf	284-7117
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Hawaiian Grill		
Lava Pit	2 Theatre Square, St. 142, Ori	253-1338
Indian		
India Palace	3740 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	284-5700
Swad Indian Cuisine	3602 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	962-9575
Italian		
Giardino	3406 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	283-3869
La Finestra Ristorante	100 Lafayette Cir, St. 101, Laf	284-5282
La Piazza	15 Moraga Way, Ori	253-9191
Mangia Ristorante Pizzeria	975 Moraga Rd, Laf	284-3081
Michael's	1375 Moraga Way, Mor	376-4300
Mondello's	337 Rheem Blvd, Mor	376-2533
Pizza Antica	3600 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	299-0500
Postino	3565 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	299-8700
Ristorante Amorama	360 Park St, Mor	377-7662
Japanese		
Blue Ginko	3518 A Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	962-9020
Kane Sushi	3474 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	284-9709
Niwa Restaurant	1 Camino Sobrante # 6, Ori	254-1606
Serika Restaurant	2 Theatre Sq # 118, Ori	254-7088
Tamami's Japanese Restaurant	356 Park St, Mor	376-2872
Yu Sushi	19 Moraga Way, Ori	253-8399
Jazz Dinner Club		
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The Orinda House	65 Moraga Way, Ori	258-4445
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Per Tutti Ristorante	3576 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	284-5225
Mexican		
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El Charro Mexican Dining	3339 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	283-2345
El Jaro Mexican Cafe	3563 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	283-6639
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Celia's Restaurant	3666 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	283-8288
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Maya	74 Moraga Way, Ori	258-9049
Taqueria El Balazo	3518 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	284-8700
Numero Uno Taqueria	3616 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	299-1333
Pizza		
Aladino's Pizza	3614 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	283-6363
Mountain Mike's Pizza	504 Center St, Mor	377-6453
Pennini's	1375 Moraga Rd, Mor	376-1515
Round Table Pizza	"361 Rheem Blvd.", Mor	376-1411
Round Table Pizza	3637 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	283-0404
Village Pizza	19 Orinda Way # Ab, Ori	254-1200
Zamboni's Pizza	1 Camino Sobrante # 4, Ori	254-2800
Sandwiches/Deli		
Bianca's Deli	1480 Moraga Rd # A, Mor	376-4400
Europa Hofbrau Deli & Pub	64 Moraga Way, Ori	254-7202
Gourmet Bistro Café	484 Center St, Mor	376-1551
Kasper's Hot Dogs	99 Brookwood Rd, Ori	254-2908
Noah's Bagels	3518 Mt. Diablo Blvd, Laf	299-0716
Orinda Deli	19 F Orinda Way, Ori	254-1990
South American		
The Patio Tapas and restaurant	960 Moraga Road, Laf	299-6885
Steak		
Casa Orinda	20 Bryant Way, Ori	254-2981
Tea		
Patisserie Lafayette	71 Lafayette Cir, Laf	283-2226
Thai		
Amarin Thai Cuisine	3555 Mt. Diablo Blvd # B, Laf	283-8883
Baan Thai	99 Orinda Way, Ori	253-0989
Royal Siam	512 Center St, Mor	377-0420
Siam Orchid	23 Orinda Way # F, Ori	253-1975