

The Classy Pub

By Linda A. Ditch
Photos by Lynn Bohannon

The Public House offers a pub atmosphere with an upscale kick

You might say Andrew Schain is an accidental chef. He started his professional life as an accountant. After entering the restaurant world, he spent 10 years as the general manager at Bentleys in Woodstock, where one day the chef informed him he was moving to Florida . . . in an hour. Thanks to a great kitchen staff, he survived this culinary baptism by fire and developed his skills as a restaurant cook.

Those skills have found a home in Andrew's own restaurant, The Public House at Quechee Gorge. He and partner Scott Bacon, owner of Perfect Coat Painting, opened the doors in September 2015. "Scott and I were looking for a place for quite a

Right: Owners Andrew Schain (left) and Scott Bacon.
Below: House-crafted New York Deli Burger.





QUECHEE GORGE
The
PUBLIC HOUSE
FOOD & DRINK

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1. Sign over the front door welcomes guests.
2. The House Chopped Salad.
3. Katie Hanscom pours a beer.
4. The dining room offers plenty of seating.
5. Take a seat at the bar or at a table in the tavern.
6. Find your favorite beer on tap, or try a new one.
7. "You had me at schnitzel."

while," Andrew says. "This one came up, and when we saw the location right on Route 4, by the gorge, in a freestanding building with lots of parking, we said, 'We're in!'"

COMFORT AND STYLE

Andrew and Scott did a complete makeover of the building, which was next to the Quality Inn hotel. Andrew's mom, an interior designer, helped style the space into what he describes as a pub with décor and ambience on a classier scale. The bar was expanded to seat 20; new lighting sets the mood; and artwork decorates the walls. Televisions were also installed, and 12 varieties of beer are available on tap. When the weather gets



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WHAT'S NEW



Amy Kaminski sets a table.

warmer, seating will be available outside on the deck.

"It's definitely a pub-style atmosphere with the craft beers, the long bar, and the TVs," Andrew says. "But it could easily be turned into a fine-dining establishment. It's a pub atmosphere with an upscale kick."

"YOU HAD ME AT SCHNITZEL"

The menu is equally as diverse as the décor, featuring dishes that range from ribeye steaks to hot dogs. Weekly specials include burgers on Mondays, wings on Wednesdays, and fish on Fridays, with Thursdays saved for home-style offerings such as meatloaf or chicken pot pie. Saturday is steak night, with a different cut of meat featured each week.

Since the pub opened, three menu items have proven to be the most popular. The loaded tater tots are smothered in smoked bacon, tomatoes, jalapenos, green onions, and cheddar cheese and topped with sour cream. The burgers are made with locally sourced beef and can be topped with everything from the traditional onions and pickles to mushrooms, maple-bourbon bacon, and a farm-fresh



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egg. The most requested dish is the chicken schnitzel, which is a breaded chicken breast served with lemon-caper butter.

On their first night, a female customer said, "You had me at the schnitzel." Andrew decided to quote her in naming the dish. He says, "Honestly, if I had only schnitzel, burgers, and loaded tots on the menu, we would be okay."

Andrew selected the menu items based on his almost 20 years in the restaurant trade. He also pays attention to what sells and what customers request. While he says the menu is always a work in progress, he doesn't plan to make changes very often, choosing instead to be creative with the specials. The one exception so far is the addition of the quarter-pound gourmet hot dog, which was so popular as a special he decided to make it a regular option.

PUB TRADITIONS AND MORE

In keeping with pub tradition, The Public House has a trivia night every Thursday, with teams and individuals competing for five to six rounds of general trivia knowledge. Live music is featured each Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday. Andrew also creates menus around special events, such as the Super Bowl and holidays. »

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WHAT'S NEW



Stop in for a tasty meal.

Andrew acknowledges this first year in business is a learning process, not only in making menu selections but also in other areas. He expects the busy season to run from Memorial Day to Halloween as visitors make their way through the area. As he learns the ebb and flow of customers to the pub, he foresees making further adjustments along the way, such as adding lunch hours every day instead of just on weekends. (He says following the pub's Facebook page is the best way to keep up with the latest happenings.)

"It's challenging, and I love a challenge," Andrew says. "I love working with people and the public, and I've come to love cooking food. I find it really enjoyable. There is a peace of mind while cooking. It's satisfying to complete a shift, after a big rush of people, and high-five the guys on the line." 🍷

▶ The Public House

5813 Woodstock Road
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Online Extra




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