

Main Line Today

SERVING PHILADELPHIA'S WESTERN SUBURBS

JULY 2003

Home Plate

Who knew a bank could be sexy until David Mantelmacher unlocked the vault in 1993, unleashing the Center City phenomenon known as Circa? So even before the Penn Valley resident fired up in Suburban Square in April, foodies across the Main Line were predicting that any sibling of Circa was sure to be hot.

If the crowd around the glowing horseshoe-shaped bar for a recent happy hour was any indication, Plate is fast becoming a favorite. Could it be the Plateinis (a signature concoction of Sauza tequila, Midori and pineapple, \$10), mango daiquiris (\$8), melon margaritas (\$8) and six draft beers (\$3.50 to \$5), or is it the 42-inch plasma-screen TV?

Plate occupies the site that most frequently housed La Parisienne and Za Stonefired Pizza. Mantelmacher went for comfy instead of high concept. Though the mahogany-accented, Italian-furnished restaurant probably doesn't look like your mom's kitchen, the hearth does make it homey—and it turns out

sizzling comfort food that bears the savvy signature of executive chef Tom Harkins.

Macaroni-and-cheese will make you feel warm and gooey inside, especially when accompanied by barbecue shrimp and buttermilk biscuits (\$8.75). June Cleaver would have appreciated homespun deviled eggs with smoked salmon and black bread (\$7.75) and the mini grilled cheddar cheese sandwich perched in the center of a steaming bowl of roasted tomato soup (\$5.50).

Mantelmacher wanted to make sure the prices were comforting, too. A heaping platter of slow-smoked beef brisket with potato salad, coleslaw and jalapeño cream cheese corn bread is \$15. Herb-crusted cedar-plank salmon with asparagus and roasted potatoes is \$17.50. Even less expensive: entrée salads such as Asian-smoked chicken with spicy cashews and ponzu vinaigrette (\$12) and Caesar with crabcake (\$14), as well as such dinner sandwiches as pan-seared chicken breast with pancetta,



Roquefort and baby arugula (\$9) or ovenfired vegetables (\$8.75).

Desserts (ample enough for two, \$6.50) are also homey. One of the best is a stonefired fruit cobbler served with a scoop of homemade ice cream. But pastry chef Angela Tustin's ice cream really takes a turn when scooped atop tiny caramel tuille cones sprinkled with multi-colored jimmies and presented on a custom Plexiglas painter's palette. Artistic, indeed. — *M.O.T.*