

Try the pig wings at Creekside Grille



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Numerous trustworthy people recommended the Creekside Grille to me, but I was skeptical.

It's located five miles south of Waterford on Route 19, and the only place I could remember in that area was a roadhouse full of hard-drinking, unsavory characters -- the sort of leather-clad goons who rode with Marlon Brando in "The Wild One."

"Those were the old days," said Creekside owner Dan Passerotti. "There used to be a joint here called the French Creek. Bands had to play behind chicken wire, and people were always driving their motorcycles into the bar.

"If they were really drunk, they'd drive them into the creek out back. Cars, trucks, snowmobiles ... everything you can think of has been pulled out of that creek."

The French Creek was demolished 11 years ago and replaced with the current structure -- a rustic log cabin.

"We've made a lot of changes," said Passerotti, who's owned the Creekside for four years. "We're nonsmoking now, and we cater to families. We actually sell a lot more food than alcohol."

When I stopped in on a Thursday evening, I found the place packed with hungry diners of all ages. Most of them were there for the two-for-one chicken wing special, but I opted for meat of a different feather.

"Ah, yes ... the pig wings," said Passerotti. "Those are really popular. Whenever we put them on special, we sell out."

Pig wings are deep-fried pork shanks served with your choice of 20 sauces. The plump shanks are slightly crisp on the outside, but ridiculously tender inside -- and the bone sticks out just far enough to form a perfect dippin' handle. I ordered mine with a bowl of sweet Cajun sauce, and after two bites, I was already planning my next trip to the Creekside.

When I finished eating, I went into the bar to check out the chain saw art I'd been hearing about.

There's a huge, elaborately carved eagle, an intricately detailed turkey and even some surprisingly lifelike rainbow trout.

"Some people think those are real stuffed fish when they look at them," said Passerotti. "But they're not -- they're wood."

Local chain saw artist Joe Armstrong carved and painted all the wildlife.

"I have an arrangement with Joe," said Passerotti. "I let him put on demonstrations and sell his work in the parking lot, and he decorates the bar."

Some of the décor is a bit more risqué. A large deer head on the wall is strewn with brassieres of various sizes and colors. A fellow patron caught me admiring the sight and snickered.

"Girls will be girls," she said.

Going to the Creekside Grille is kind of like taking a camping trip. You're in a log cabin, surrounded by woodsy carvings and strong drinks. You eat your dinner off an enamel plate.

Outside, there's a deck on the bank of scenic French Creek. Whether you arrive by canoe or car, motorcycle or snowmobile, you're sure to have a good time.

So, like their menu says, come on down and "Jump-in-the-Creek."