

FUN DINING WITH DENNIS AND MICHELLE >>>

[a dining experience that pairs Fun 101.3 radio show hosts, Michelle Cruz and Dennis Mitchell, with local restaurants.]



Mulberry Social Kitchen + Bar
300 West James Street
Lancaster, PA 17603
(717) 947-7162
www.mulberrysocial.com



Fun Dining at Mulberry Social

In this 38th installment of Fun Dining with Fun 101.3 radio show hosts Dennis Mitchell and Michelle Cruz, we tackle one of downtown Lancaster's coziest neighborhood hangouts: Mulberry Social Kitchen + Bar, and learn a few things in the process. Namely, Michelle takes her vodka straight, and Sriracha lovers need not settle for Wendy's to get a fix of this on-trend spice—all vital information for your everyday life.

For Drinks

The drink list that reads like a tour of the streets of Lancaster. Orders include the Fruitville Pike, a fresh-squeezed, grapefruit juice-infused version of a Moscow Mule; and the Jefferson St. Fashioned, a take on an Old Fashioned using Jefferson's bourbon, fresh figs and orange. Michelle is particularly fond of this.

Dennis proclaims his love for Evil Genius beer while Michelle admits that she prefers her vodka by itself. Our server, Tanya Sutcliffe (whom Dennis probes to discover is a distant relative of former Major League Baseball pitcher Rick Sutcliffe) places Michelle's vodka martini in front of her.

"That is beautiful," she says, admiring the curly lemon peel in her glass.

For Starters

Caramelized onion and rosemary focaccia bread is brought out with a plate of olive oil sprinkled with fresh ground pepper and Parmigiano. A special tasting menu is on its way, hand-picked by head chef and co-owner Carl Vitale, who opened Mulberry Social with business

partner Tara Welsh in 2015.

Michelle learns that Vitale also runs the kitchen of one of her favorite restaurants, Gibraltar, and exclaims, "I'm really excited because I feel like I just found Gibraltar's casual little sister!"

Chef Alex D'Innocenzo, who could pass for a young John Cusack, presents the table with a mushroom ravioli with porcini truffle cream, Kennett Square mushrooms, and spinach. We also have a local butternut squash, roasted with allspice and ginger on a bed of whipped goat cheese, topped with pomegranate seeds and micro kale.

Next comes a plate of roasted wild mushroom fritters in the most perfectly browned, breadcrumb coating with black truffle aioli, gruyere, and arugula. "Fritters!" Dennis cries upon seeing them. Paired with the fritters is a tower of tuna tartare with diced avocado and ginger lime vinaigrette, served with a basket of house made potato chips seasoned with garlic oil and Sriracha "dust."

Tanya comes back to clear our plates before the next course, and asks if someone is going to eat that last little bit of tuna. (It feels like a cardinal sin to leave it.) Dennis calls it "tuna abuse" before it is quickly consumed.

For Dinner

A four-cheese pizza made with fontina, pecorino, taleggio, and mozzarella arrives at the table. Dennis extols its virtues: "You know what's good about pizza? Everything."

Next comes pumpkin gnocchi in a venison Bolognese topped with a dollop of house made wildflower honey ricotta. Dennis and Michelle are enchanted by the taste of honey and compliment the way it lifts the palate for the heartiness of the venison.

"I'm thinking about Rudolph right now as I eat this," says Dennis.

An elegant plating of fettuccine

is presented, luxuriating in a sherry lobster sauce with spinach, scallops, shrimp, crab, and mussels. "Wow!" says Michelle. "We're sharing?"

Just when our radio hosts think they can't possibly eat another bite, two glistening hamburgers appear on a pair of beautiful, LeBus brioche buns. These are made with a house blend of ground chuck, brisket, short rib, and dry aged beef.

"Oh my gracious!" exclaims Dennis.

The first burger is built on a layer of smoked onion confit and topped with aged cheddar and Applewood smoked bacon. The second is an off-menu Sriracha aioli burger topped with mozzarella, avocado, and an onion ring. Michelle wonders if it's as good as a Wendy's Sriracha burger and receives her answer upon sinking her teeth into it. She swoons over the tender, flavorful burger and says, "A good blend is what it's all about."

"Unfortunately, too many people don't realize you can actually get a burger that good," says Dennis.

For Dessert

There's just enough room for dessert, and a double dip amaretto crème brûlée with chocolate mousse arrives. Topped with whipped cream and almond brittle, it's completely devoured.

For the Road

On their way out, Dennis and Michelle are met by Chef D'Innocenzo one last time and are asked to sample a quail dish he's been working on. Conversation takes off and he brings out two of his prized copper pots inherited from his grandmother that he uses in the kitchen.

Our very full radio hosts are charmed as they thank Mulberry Social for an amazing meal. This independent bistro easily ends up in their top five favorite Fun Dining experiences. 🍷