

Sparkling Equinox Diner Welcomes Hungry Travelers

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by Tony Schillaci & Don Church



(l-r) Kevin O' Connor, manager, Jaime Williams, associate, Stephanie Binkoski, associate, and Jimmy Doukas, owner, are excited for the opening of the Equinox Diner, Mystic.

When the sun crossed the equator, and the night and day were of equal length on March 20, marking the start of spring, the new Equinox Diner, Mystic, was only open for its fourth day!

Owner Jimmy Doukas expected a “soft opening” on St. Patrick’s Day. Instead, the minute he opened the doors, hungry locals and travelers poured in and continue to fill the booths at this exciting 21st century diner ever since.

The clean, crisp and trendy new addition to the Mystic dining scene is at 253 Greenmanville Avenue, just off exit 90 - the location of the old Bickfords.

Jimmy tore the old structure down after renovations dictated that a new restaurant needed to be built from scratch. Now, a year-and-a-half-later, with the cooperation of “the nicest, most supportive community anywhere” says Jimmy, the 260-seat diner reflects his motto, “We Put The Dining Back Into Diner.”

Immediately upon walking through the sparkling glass front doors, your eyes are fixed upon a display case filled with made-in-house cakes, chocolate croissants, pastries and cookies that are begging to be taken home!

“We do all our own baking, use the freshest ingredients, and make everything right here, from the soups to breads to the salad dressings. Only prime Angus beef is served, and the Sesame Ahi

Tuna is top-grade. You can come in here for a salad, a sandwich, some eggs, a cup of coffee and a cannoli, or have a three-course dinner and a glass of wine - if you'd like a stronger drink before dinner we have a full bar," Jimmy proudly tells the Resident.

The light and airy space was conceived by Jimmy and his wife, Francine, with the help of a New York interior designer. The walls behind the bakery case are covered in tiny blue and white ceramic tiles, and the yellow ceiling gives the effect of sunlight, even on a chilly grey day. Large colorful booths add to the ambience and the cheerful wait staff in dark blue shirts move through the space like the planets around the sun.

Jimmy Doukas didn't always want to be in the diner business. His dad owned a diner on Long Island, where Jimmy helped out from the time he was 12. As a kid he was once given a 30-pound bag of onions, a knife, some batter and was told to "go make onion rings." After school and on weekends, he worked the grill and bussed and waited tables. "I attended the diner school of hard knocks during high school," he says with a laugh.

When it came time to go to college, Jimmy attended St. Johns, and planned to finish St. Johns Law School, but Mr. Doukas, Sr. suffered a heart attack, so Jimmy delayed continuing law school in order to run the diner for his father. The rest, as they say, is culinary history.

Now living in Westchester County, New York with his wife Francine and three children aged 15, 13 and 6, Jimmy commutes between his home, his other restaurant in Orange, CT and the new Mystic location. Francine calls him the "I-95 road warrior."

"I have two passions in my life," says Jimmy, "my family and my restaurants." (He even has "My Wife's Chicken" on the menu, and there's a dish on the menu named for each of his children!)

The passion, energy and heart that Jimmy puts into his business shows in the constant smile that lights up his face when he talks about the Equinox and his family. He's thrilled with the "kindness of the people in Mystic." They've watched the progress of the Equinox Diner from the beginning and cheered him along.

As we finished our delicious coffee and cannoli and saw another group of ten customers pouring through the front doors, we thought, "This is great! Mystic is lucky to have such a fantastic new addition. We're sure glad Jimmy didn't become a lawyer!"