


# Louisville Dining And Restaurants

RESTAURANT REVIEW

## Blackstone Grille is a dining oasis

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The Blackstone Grille is the creation of Rick and Cathy Dissell, who have been fixtures on the Louisville restaurant scene since opening Rick's a quarter century ago in St. Matthews. I knew I was going to like their new place from the moment I stepped through the door. (12/20/08) [More](#)



December 20, 2008

## Blackstone Grille is a dining oasis

*By Marty Rosen  
Special to The Courier-Journal*

I knew I was going to like the Blackstone Grille from the moment I stepped through the door.

The sound system was pulsing softly to the beat of jazzy vibraphones. To the left I could see an intimate bar populated by a small, happy-looking crowd. On the right, the dining room was a shadowy oasis of calm — dark walls, a few oversized posters touting vintage champagnes and Italian road rallies from a century ago, blue panels that seeped soft light from the ceiling, and one prominent wall of red and white squiggles as jaunty as a French accordion player's cravat.

The restaurant simply exuded a welcoming casual poise that made me feel instantly at home — and nothing I've experienced on multiple visits has changed that impression.

The Blackstone Grille, which opened last summer in the Prospect Point Shopping Center, is the creation of Rick and Cathy Dissell, who have been fixtures on the Louisville restaurant scene since opening Rick's in St. Matthews more than a quarter-century ago.

The Blackstone is decidedly distinct from the last incarnation of Rick's. For one thing, it eschews all references to Humphrey Bogart, the proprietor of Rick's Café Américain in "Casablanca." For another, this space is at most half the size of the old Rick's.

And yet, some things have stayed the same. Most important, longtime chef Alastair Holland still presides over the kitchen and has put together a versatile, well-executed menu (with plenty of dishes that were featured on pre-Blackstone menus), and he's managed to do it at prices that offer fair value for strapped pocketbooks.

Out front, the servers are knowledgeable, efficient and friendly, and Rick Dissell is a frequent presence, ensuring that guests are well tended.

Eight oysters on the half shell (\$11.95) were fresh — and though their flavor wasn't as sharply briny as I prefer, that's not something over which a chef has much control.

What the kitchen could control, it did: The platter was attractively arranged, functionally decorated with wedges of lemon and lime, and, best of all, furnished not only with cocktail sauce but also with an extra dish of pure horseradish I could use to customize the sauce.

Appetizers are priced at \$5 from 4 to 7 p.m., making the bar a fine refuge for folks looking to nosh on hand-breaded calamari (regular price, \$8.25) or a collard green and artichoke dip (\$6.50).

An enormous slice of cool iceberg lettuce laid the foundation for a plank salad (\$5.95) that would easily suffice for a full meal, or salad for two. If the strips of bacon on top were a tad flaccid, they still added a fine tinge of smoke, and looked great against a backdrop of crumbled blue cheese, bright red cherry tomatoes and a piquant house-made Thousand Island dressing.

Pastas and entrees are served with appropriate side dishes and draw on a mix of European, Caribbean and Southern traditions. One night, I feasted on fried chicken livers (\$15.50), each one tender, perfectly trimmed and wrapped in peppery, crunchy batter. Served with a scoop of custardy

corn pudding, a dollop of pork-seasoned collard greens and a bowl of rich, chunky white gravy, it was classic Southern comfort food.

A strip steak sandwich (\$13.95) was grilled precisely as ordered, fell apart tenderly under the knife and came to the table in the very good company of a rich, cheesy spinach casserole. (Three steaks top the entrée list, one seasoned with roasted garlic butter, another with Boursin butter and a third with chipotle butter, all priced at \$25.95 or less.)

Other entrees include a couple of chicken dishes (chicken breasts, fried and sautéed) and an appealing assortment of fish and seafood dishes.

One night, I envied a platter of sizzling, bacon-wrapped sea scallops on a nearby table (\$23.95), but I'd already ordered Atlantic salmon (\$18.95), and in the end had no reason to regret the choice.

Chef Holland seems intrigued by the ways brown sugar interacts with fish — at least intrigued enough to use it in multiple dishes. For the salmon, he uses it judiciously, pitting a hint of faint, dark sweetness against a vibrant lemon-balsamic reduction to craft a dish that creates a pleasant fusion of tropical, continental and Southern riffs.

There's nothing of fusion in a dessert of bread pudding, though (\$5). It's a devoutly American dessert, rich, moist, laced with bittersweet chocolate and infused with the rich flavor of good bourbon.

E-mail freelance restaurant critic Marty Rosen at [cjdining@gmail.com](mailto:cjdining@gmail.com).

## Additional Facts

Blackstone Grille



**Address:** 9521A U.S. 42, Prospect

**Telephone:** (502) 228-6962

**Web:** [www.theblackstonegrille.com](http://www.theblackstonegrille.com)

**Cuisine:** Regional American

**Alcohol:** Full bar, specialty cocktails; several dozen wines, mostly American, are offered at reasonable prices, with many in the \$30 vicinity, and plenty of by-the-glass options (Penfold's Koonunga Hills shiraz-cabernet, \$7.25/\$29; Clos du Bois chardonnay, \$7.50/\$30); a short beer list includes some local craft beer options (BBC).

**Vegetarian:** Few options.

**Price range:** Moderate. Most entrees, with accompaniments, are under \$20; sandwiches cluster around \$10. Exclusive of alcohol, two people could dine well for under \$50.

**Reservations:** Reservations are accepted.

**Credit cards:** AE, Discover, MC, V.

**Children's menu:** Yes, ask your server.

**Smoking:** No.

**Access:** The restaurant appears to be fully accessible for people using wheelchairs.

**Hours:** Monday-Tuesday, bar opens at 4 p.m., dining room at 5 p.m., service continues until around 9

p.m.; Wednesday-Saturday, bar, 4 p.m., dining room 5 p.m., service until around 10 p.m. Sunday brunch is served 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Beginning Dec. 29, the restaurant will be closed on Mondays, and Sunday hours will be extended.

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