

DINING OUT

American fare – something for everyone

In Lahaska, there've been some changes made

Susan S. Yeske

The sign has been changed, the new menu is in place and renovations are complete; Caleb's American Kitchen is officially in business.

The transition that began in May when chef Caleb Lentchner bought the former Waterlilies Restaurant in Lahaska became complete earlier this month. Lentchner, who is known locally from his years as executive chef and general manager at Marsha Brown in New Hope, spent the summer months making the transition away from the Waterlilies menu to his own version of "new American cuisine."

That means a dinner menu that ranges from Jail Island salmon to



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The chef likes to create classic dishes with a twist, such as this lobster roll wrapped in a crisp brioche crust.



THOMAS ROBERT CLARKE PHOTOGRAPHY

Caleb Lentchner has officially debuted a new menu at his recently renovated restaurant, Caleb's American Kitchen in Lahaska.

South Beach ceviche mini tacos, Kansas City strip steak, New England lobster rolls and Santa Cruz fish tacos.

"I'm doing a realistic approach to farm-to-table," Lentchner said. "I use local ingredients when they are available." He also buys regionally, and when he goes farther afield for ingredients, "I always use American products," he said. A case in point is the olive oil he gets from California.

After years of working for others, Lentchner took his time developing a menu that is a reflection of his knowledge and preferences as a chef. He wanted a menu that has something for everyone, or at least as close as he could get. That means that at din-

ner-time customers can order a hearty meat, chicken or fish dinner with all the trimmings, a burger or a grilled tofu plate.

To satisfy his diners, "I've embraced vegetarianism, veganism, gluten-free and paleo" dining, he said.

Happily enjoyed by his breakfast customers – not just vegetarians and those in search of gluten-free dishes – have been his tofu and corn tortilla scramble, potato-crust frittatas and johnny cakes. Meanwhile, paleo diner digs into his

Southwestern-style "breakfast of champions" with poached eggs, chorizo, sautéed spinach, fresh salsa and avocado.

At lunch, customers still order

appetizer that comes as an empanada, and the lobster roll that is served in a crisp brioche crust. His chopped salad includes gorgonzola cheese, Lancaster smoked bacon, artichoke hearts, beans, chickpeas, egg, cucumber, onion and croutons tossed with julienned greens and finished with balsamic vinaigrette.

When the restaurant was Waterlilies it was known for its prix fixe dinners. Those are no longer part of the menu, but Lentchner has kept a close eye on prices in order to make his restaurant accessible. "I don't want to be a Saturday night-only restaurant," he said.

So far, that hasn't been a problem as customers from around the region are making return visits. "There is no greater compliment than someone coming in three times a week," he said. And while breakfast has always been popular, he's finding customers who enjoy breakfast deciding to come back for dinner.

In the coming months he's looking forward to holiday parties in the second dining room, and next spring he hopes to add outside dining.

Visitors will notice a dramatic change in the décor. As the result of the recent renovation, "we have changed from a country feel to a contemporary setting," he said.

Specials appear on the restaurant's Facebook page, and people are taking the time to find them, Lentchner said – then coming back.

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CALEB'S AMERICAN KITCHEN

5738 Route 202, Lahaska
215-794-8588, Facebook

Hours: 8 a.m.-3 p.m. daily;
dinner 5-9 p.m. Tue.-Sat.,
Sun. 4:30-8:30 p.m.

Cost: Breakfast \$5-\$12,
lunch \$8-\$13, dinner \$12-
\$36.

Customer favorites: Steaks,
lobster rolls, tofu scramble,
apple walnut pancakes,
Thanksgiving sandwich, fish
tacos, potato-crust frittatas,
quiche, burgers.

BYOB