

The Suffolk News-Herald

By Matthew Ward

Foodie recognition for Vintage Tavern

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North Suffolk has been put on the map for foodies who are after an authentic taste of the South.

Two menu items from the Vintage Tavern on Bridge Road were selected for “The Southern Foodie,” a new guidebook to Southern restaurants and the food that made them famous.

Kenny Reynolds, pastry chef at the restaurant since February 2006, provided two of the book’s 134 recipes — muscadine grape jelly and Key lime chess pie.

When in season, the jelly preserve, from a grape native to the area, is served in a shot glass on a plate alongside buttermilk biscuits, deviled eggs, pickles, country ham and tavern sausages.

The Key lime chess pie is an egg custard pie; the jury is still out on exactly how it got its name.

“There’s a lot of different versions of where that name come from,” Reynolds said, adding that the Food Lovers’ Guide lists “chess” as an old English word.

In another version, “Back in the day, you would go someone’s house ... and say, ‘What’s for dessert?’ and they would reply, ‘Just pie,’” Reynolds said. “The Southern slang turned it into chess pie.”

The Johnson & Wales University College of Culinary Arts graduate manages the Tavern’s menu with Chef de Cuisine Joseph Steinert and the rest of the team.

“Our whole team has involvement and ideas,” said Reynolds, who credits the restaurant’s former executive chef, Sam McGann, with giving him the leeway to forge his own style.

“For me, he was a great mentor — by letting me step into this role and do the things that I wanted to do on the pastry side.”

Reynolds believes McGann’s wife Cindy, who directed operations at the tavern “for a long time” before moving on last year, submitted the recipes for the book.

By Nashville-based food and drink writer Chris Chamberlain, “The Southern Foodie” is subtitled “100 Places to Eat in the South Before You Die (and the Recipes That Made Them Famous).”

“I think she (Cindy McGann) submitted it,” Reynolds said. “I do remember her asking me for the recipes.”

Then the book showed up Thursday morning, and then I went and looked at the (book's) Facebook page; we were elated to see that ... because we are a destination restaurant."

Reynolds grew up on a farm near Danville.

"We raised hogs every year," he said. "Just like in the old days, on the coldest day of the year we'd slaughter them, and the extended family came out and helped; then you go over and help them on their farm.

"Being born and raised in the South ... when this restaurant opened, I heard about it and thought, 'That's where I'm going to work.'"