

MAY 30 - JUNE 5, 2013

VOL. 20 NO. 16

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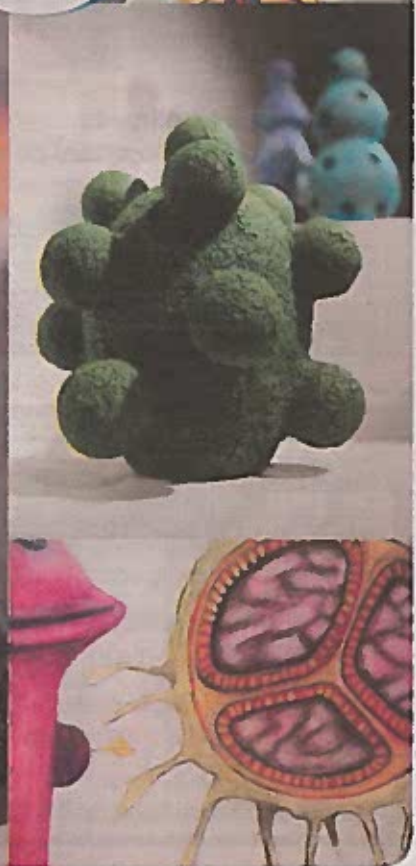
macabre

'Museum of
Alternative
History'
opens
its doors
at RNG
Gallery

BY MICHAEL J. KRINAK

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OMAHA'S
NEWEST
OYSTER BAR
AND RESTAURANT
BRINGS SOME
COASTAL
STYLE
TO THE
OLD MARKET

BY RACHEL GRACE



PLANK PASSION

The dynamic restaurateurs known as Flagship Restaurant Group first opened Blue Sushi, which revolutionized the Sunday happy hour while also expanding as far as Denver and Fort Worth. Last year, they brought us Blatt Beer & Table in North Downtown, and before that, Roja Mexican Grill and Margarita Bar became another Old Market favorite. There hasn't been a bum concept yet.

Diners who don't fancy big restaurant chains will be pleased to know that Plank, their newest endeavor, is run by a group of down-to-earth, passionate individuals who worked diligently over the last few months to ready their newly constructed space for business.

The Reader spoke with Anthony Hitchcock, director of operations, and Matt Moser, executive chef, for the details.

The Reader: How did Plank come to be?

Anthony Hitchcock: The space around 12th and Howard became available, and it was just a really difficult location for us to pass up. Once we decided we wanted to open a fish house, we traveled a bit, and went to the coasts, to see what was out there. It seemed like oysters were being served everywhere, whether it was a fish house or not. And I'm a big oyster fan. We really got inspired out there, especially in New York City.

TR: How did you go about developing the menu?

Matt Moser: It took Tony [Gentile, Corporate Executive Chef] and I about 2.5 months. Tony is from the Gulf side of Texas, so he had a lot of ideas. I was at the Blue Sushi in Denver when he called and asked me to help run the restaurant.

AH: I think it was 50/50 Matt and Tony. They worked out of Blue developing the menu, adjusting the recipes. It was a neat thing to watch. If you popped in on the right day, you'd get to try a lobster roll.

TR: What would you say to someone who might be wary of eating oysters, especially in the Midwest?

AH: I think some people might be scared of the fact that they're served raw, but we also fry them, and also wood-fire barbecue them, so it's a good way to start.

MM: We get a variety of species in. Different sizes, different solidities, different flavor profiles for each oyster, so you can start off with smaller oysters with hints of cucum-

ber, and then kind of progress into the bigger oysters. We get them flown in several times a week from both coasts.

TR: What are some of the more exclusive menu items, besides oysters?

MM: Alligator. It's tail meat soaked in buttermilk and then fried, served with onion straws and pepperoncini, and a Creole dijon-aise sauce.

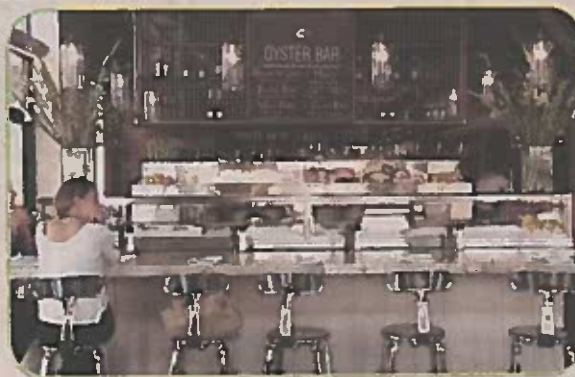
TR: What are your other favorites?

MM: The desserts. We made a play off of popular fish house desserts, like bananas foster bread pudding and key lime panna

cotta. 98% of what we serve is from scratch. It's a huge undertaking, but I have two great sous chefs [David Meegan and Chase Thomsen], and everyone just works their tails off to make it happen.

TR: Where do you think Plank will fit in to the Omaha restaurant scene?

MM: Plank is on the right path in Omaha for what people



crumbs

■ **Bluffs Bash** is a two-day event Friday, June 7, and Saturday, June 8, that will showcase area artists and musicians from Council Bluffs and its surrounding areas. Enjoy family friendly activities and listen to free concerts! All day Saturday your kids can play around in the largest field of bounce houses ever blown up in one area! The bash leads up to the finale with **Preservation Hall Jazz Band**. Bluffs Bash will be located at River's Edge Park (at the foot of the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge) and runs from 5-10p.m. on Friday and from 11-10p.m. on Saturday. Admission is free.



■ **Village Pointe Cinemas** have opened a new cocktail lounge: **Take 5** is now open for cocktails before, after or during the film. Located inside the theatre at 304 North 174th St. at the Village Pointe Shopping Mall.

■ **The Fourth Annual Polish-fest** will be held on June 8 at the **Huber-Haus German Bier Hall** which is located on the

lower-level of the **Crescent Moon** on 36th and Farnam in Midtown. The party starts at noon and will be held indoors and outdoors. There will be many different Polish beers on tap and in bottles, such as Zywiec, Warka, Tatra, Hevelius, EB and Le ajak.

In addition, there will be \$2.00 Je ynowka shots (Blackberry Brandy) all night. Attendees can dine on Polish Sausage, Glombki, and Perogies with LIVE polka music from the **Bobby "Z"** and **Polka Jay** starting at 2:00 p.m. This is a family friendly event. There is no cover or admission to get in. For more information call 402.345.1708

— Krista O'Malley

Crumbs is about indulging in food and celebrating its many forms. Send information about area food and drink businesses to crumbs@thereader.com.

are yearning for. Benson and Dundee can only expand so far. Downtown has so much to offer with great restaurants, and they're going to keep coming.

The 5,000 square-foot restaurant, with a wraparound 50-seat patio, opened May 9. So far, Omahans have loved the oysters: Plank ordered 2,000 just for one weekend. "You can add lemon, hot sauce, cocktail, horseradish, or mignonette sauce. I've seen people eat them with a fork, on a cracker, or just slurp them down. It's however you want them," says Hitchcock. Start with Miyagi or Chefs Creek oysters for mild flavors. Plank also offers steaks, salads, soups and other seafood entrees.

The beverage program, developed by Hitchcock and bartender Sean Bokelman, features freshly squeezed lemonade as a vehicle for booze and Napa Valley fruit purees. Ask about the eight chrome tap handles behind the bar. They dispense keg wines from Argentina, France, California and New York.

You might recognize some familiar faces at Plank. Stop by and say hello. After a couple of spiked lemonades, you'll be ready to discuss that burning question: Are oysters really an aphrodisiac? ☞

Plank Seafood & Provisions, 1205 Howard Street 402.507.4480, plankseafood.com. Mon-Sat: 11a.m.-close, Sun: noon-close. Daily happy hour; call for details.