

Memphis Flyer



“Pssst!”

ORDERING FROM THE "SECRET" MENU

by STACEY GREENBERG

September 16, 2010

On a recent trip to California, I had lunch at In-N-Out Burger, which has a very limited menu featuring hamburgers, cheeseburgers, French fries, soda, and milkshakes. When the man next to me sat down with a carton of fries topped with two slices of cheese, grilled onions, pickles, and "special spread," I felt cheated. I soon found out that these "animal style" fries were on In-N-Out's *secret* menu. Apparently, lots of national fast food and chain restaurants have them.

That got me wondering — do any of our local restaurants have secret menus? Indeed they do, I discovered. Some have entire menus, some are even willing to make up menu items just for you, and others have a dish or two. Here's a sampling.

Secret Menus

At **Andrew Michael Italian Kitchen** (712 W. Brookhaven Cir., 347-3569), chefs Andrew Ticer and Michael Hudman hold "No Menu Mondays" on the last Monday of every month. They create a four-course dinner and do not give the customers a menu until the end of the meal, so no one knows what they are about to eat. Dishes in the past have included beef heart and tongue sandwiches, confit chicken thighs, and pig-skin "pasta."



JUSTIN FOX BURKS
Andrew Ticer and Michael
Hudman of Andrew Michael
Italian Kitchen

For five or six years, **Bari Ristorante** (22 S. Cooper, 722-2244) has been doing a "secret" Sunday dinner for the staff. Regulars can sometimes get leftover fried chicken, meatloaf, Mexican food, fish and chips, or whatever else they had that night. The popularity of the Sunday staff dinners with regulars is what inspired owners Jason and Rebecca Severs' second restaurant, Three Angels Diner, set to open on Broad Avenue in the fall.

New Asia Restaurant (2075 Exeter, Suite 90, 751-8889 or 758-8388) in Germantown, like many Chinese restaurants across the country, has two menus — one for American customers and one for Chinese customers. If you want an authentic Chinese meal, ask for the secret menu. However, be warned that the menu items will differ significantly.

Just For You

Alex Grisanti of **Elfo Grisanti's** (2285 S. Germantown, 753-4017) is the self-declared "King of Off Menu." He says he'll make anything anyone asks for, such as gluten-free dishes or special fish dishes. "I always take care of everyone's needs," Grisanti says.

The Majestic Grille (145 S. Main, 522-8555) has several secret menu items that are named after the regulars who order them (Phillip's Finely Chopped Salad and Lawrence's Salmon). Chef Patrick Reilly also likes to fry up Cha Cha Chips — spicy potato chips served with a creamy blue cheese dip — and serve them at the bar. He'll also do a special Majestic Veggie Plate with whatever fresh vegetables are available, all prepared differently and served with basmati rice. But for a unique meal, sit at the bar near the end of the kitchen. This space is known as Jake's Chef Bar (named after the owners' 5-year-old nephew), and it's where chef Reilly creates custom, multi-course meals for up to four people.

At **Tsunami** (928 S. Cooper, 274-2556), chef/owner Ben Smith says they have a lot of off-menu requests from people who have taken his private cooking classes and tried dishes he doesn't normally serve in the restaurant. "Some nights I feel like we could just give customers a list of ingredients and have them tell us what to make. Do away with the menu altogether," Smith jokes. (My favorite is the coconut sorbet with red curry sauce.)

Ken Lumpkin, chef/owner of **Umai** (2015 Madison, 405-4241) will prepare special vegetarian and vegan items during the week upon request but is best known for his Chef's Sushi Plates, which he custom-builds according to desired cost.

Secret Menu Items

Beauty Shop (966 S. Cooper, 272-7111)

Nutella milkshake.

Boscos Squared (2120 Madison, 432-2222)

Convert any pizza into a calzone.

Huey's (1927 Madison, 726-4372)

Created by a customer, the "Cholesterol Bomb" is a chicken tender sandwich, with the chicken tenders lathered in hot wing sauce, dressed with mayonnaise, guacamole, and cheese.

Muddy's Bake Shop (5101 Sanderlin, #114, 683-8844)

"Kat's Addiction" is the secret code to get icing put on any cookie.

Pho Vietnam (1411 Poplar, 728-4711)

Banh Mi, the popular "Vietnamese po-boy."

Sweet Grass (937 S. Cooper, 278-0278)

"Goat Cheese Balls," also known as goat cheese croutons (goat cheese dusted with cornmeal and deep fried), appear on the Mixed Greens Salad but can be ordered as a six-piece appetizer with pepper relish.