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## Brasserie 292 offers bistro-style dining with an old-world flare

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Written by  
Tod Westlake  
For Focus

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If you are looking for a fine dining experience, without the hassle associated with upscale restaurants such as dress code or expensive meals, you might want to take a close look at Brasserie 292, one of the latest additions to Poughkeepsie's growing number of eateries along Main Street.

With its informal atmosphere and a menu that won't induce sticker shock, Brasserie 292 has a large, eclectic mix of offerings with a little something for everyone.

Proprietor Chris Crocco said that the concept for the restaurant is to provide the best, freshest food possible, using local ingredients, and to do so in an establishment that exudes an old-world charm associated with Poughkeepsie's boom years of the early 20th century.

"It's all about the food," Crocco said.

Crocco says that a bistro-style restaurant appeals to a broad cross-section of people.

The lunch menu includes such items as a crab cake sandwich and brasserie bar steak with entrees priced between \$10 and \$20. The dinner menu offerings include mussels with fries, double-cut pork chops and a brasserie burger. Dinner prices, too, are modest, ranging from \$14 to \$28.

But the main highlight, according to Crocco, is the raw bar. Brasserie 292 receives fresh seafood deliveries six days per week, so the clams and oysters are always fresh.

"We always have blue point oysters," Crocco said. "Our raw bar ... (has) been a really big draw for us."

According to Crocco, the restaurant is developing an excellent wine cellar. It also

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Dolce Vita Women's Calypso Sandal \$99.00

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### If you go

What: Brasserie 292  
Where: 292 Main St., Poughkeepsie  
Hours: Lunch, 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday. Dinner, 5:30-10:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 5-11 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays. Sunday Brunch, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
Phone: 845-473-0292  
Web: www.brasserie292.com

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offers a selection of imported and micro-brewed beers, including a tap devoted to the Pleasantville, Westchester County-based Captain Lawrence Brewery. He said they are working to keep the prices as low as possible.

Crocco's partners include his Culinary Institute of America-trained brother Dan as the executive chef, Stephen Gruberg, a finance attorney and restaurateur Alex Serroukas. Each put their respective expertise behind the creation of the restaurant.

They also have long family histories in the area. Gruberg traces his local roots back to the 1920s, and Serroukas to the 1960s. Serroukas' father, Gus, owned the Double O Donut and Coffee Shop on the corner of Market and Main Streets.

"I met Steve (Gruberg) when (we) were in college. We both studied finance at Sienna (College in Loudonville, Albany County)," Crocco said. "And Alex (Serroukas) and I met a few years ago."

The Crocco family has also been in the area for quite some time.

In recent years, however, Chris and Dan Crocco had been working in different parts of the northeast. Chris Crocco had been working for a number of different restaurants in the city, while Dan Crocco had been up in Maine working for renowned chef Melissa Kelly. Now they're putting their years of experience into something of their own.

"It's really nice to finally be back in this area," Chris Crocco said.

Chris Crocco said that he and his brother have been "foodies" for a long time.

"He and I got involved in the culinary world years ago," Chris Crocco said, adding that he had been studying finance in Washington D.C. when he decided to take a part-time restaurant job, where he immediately "fell in love" with the work.

"I loved everything about it," he said. "I loved the hours, I loved the people, I loved the lifestyle."

Later, at a job managing the Mojo Grill in Wappinger's Falls, Chris Crocco brought in his brother as a busboy.

"(Dan) was, in fact, the worst busboy ever," Chris Crocco said, adding that his brother was more interested in the food than in clearing tables.

"He couldn't keep his head out of the kitchen," Chris Crocco said.

Eventually, the head chef at Mojo Grill took Dan Crocco under his wing and began to show him the various stations in the kitchen.

"That actually got (Dan) started in the culinary world," Chris Crocco said. "I was in the front (of the restaurant) and he was in the back."

Over the years, each had thought about building a business.

"We each dreamed about one day owning a restaurant," Chris Crocco said. "We wanted it to be one of the old-school speakeasy-style bars, where we would be the bartenders and the owners. You know, that vintage picture of a bartender in a vest with his sleeves rolled up."