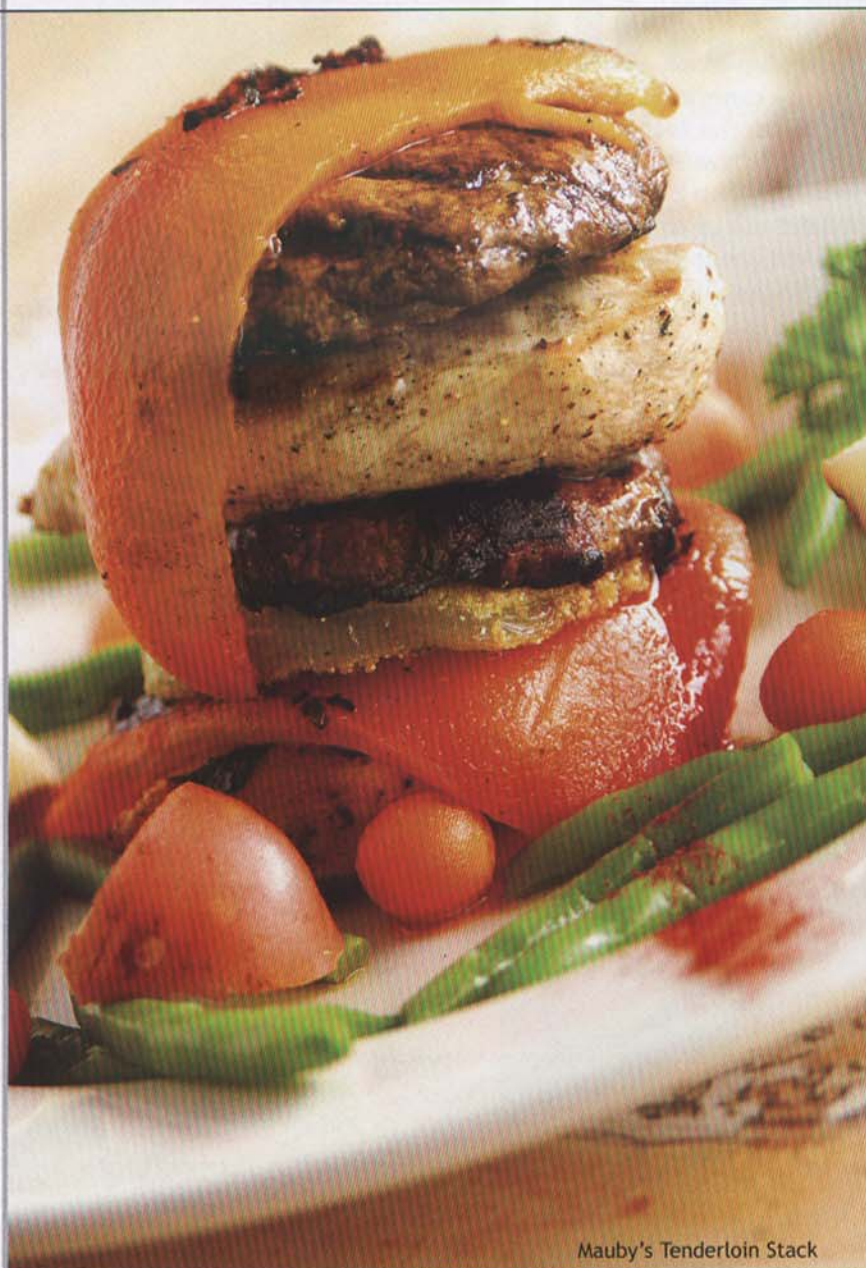


## food reservations

### Tried & True

Mauby's has been serving some of the best seafood and steaks for as long as anyone can remember.

BY LOYD MCINTOSH



Mauby's Tenderloin Stack

Every great neighborhood should have a familiar restaurant on the corner, a cool little spot that seems like it's been there forever. A restaurant that doesn't have to shout to the world that it's there, but one that whispers a reminder to you that it's been a while since your last visit or that tonight would be a great night to meet your wife for dinner after work.

Mountain Brook's Mauby's is a perfect example of that great corner restaurant. Located on the corner of Oak Street around the corner from Emmet O'Neal Library and City Hall, Mauby's is perfectly situated in the heart of Crestline Village. Mauby's has occupied its corner spot for almost two decades, although to many people in the community it feels like it's been there for much longer.

Mauby's opened for business 19 years ago specializing in a much different type of cuisine than the eclectic American fare that makes up the menu now. According to current owner Rob Rountree, Mauby's was formerly an oyster bar, named in honor of the original owner's grandmother, whose nickname was "Mauby."

However, after the restaurant came up for sale after only a few of years in business, Rountree, a lawyer by trade, and Lang Seibert, a former co-owner of Dexter's on Hollywood, bought Mauby's in 1987. The two teamed up and started Mauby's on the course it is on today, turning the restaurant into a neighborhood gem, serving up some of the best steaks and seafood in town and catering to a diverse crowd of young foodies and Mountain Brook regulars, although Rountree admits the first year or so wasn't so good for the restaurant.

"I would say it took about a year to get on track. I don't know what the restaurant's reputation was at that time, but it slowly came around and we've been doing well ever since," Rountree says.

Over the years Rountree has made only a few major changes to his corner restaurant, most importantly, he says, was building an outdoor patio area with a wood-burning fireplace. The interior of the main space has stayed relatively the same; intimate, warm and elegantly low-



key. Recently, Rountree used the services of Richard Tubb to update the look of the interior, focusing on rich dark woods, elegant mirrors in place of paintings, and calm lighting, creating an atmosphere where diners feel relaxed and able to enjoy a pleasant conversation during dinner.

When people talk about the food at Mauby's, two dishes inevitably come up in the conversation: the oyster and artichoke soup and the filet mignon. However, Rountree and his staff, led by executive chef Richard Showers, deliver excellent seafood as well, many of their dishes displaying various regional flavors along with those staples that simply must be on the menu every day and have come to define Mauby's. Mauby's isn't too daring but it isn't too conservative either.

"We've taken off on the original theme of the restaurant which had sort of a Cajun flair, but our menu really has a variety of things on it. We don't really stay within a strict, narrow line," Rountree says. "We offer our customers the finest quality food—plenty of it—with a consistency rarely found in the restaurant industry today.

"We've tried to create an enjoyable menu fit for all tastes and we will pretty much do anything that our customers ask us to do," Rountree adds.

That variety of offerings is evident the moment you take a look at the menu. Among Mauby's appetizers, diners will find such items as grilled portobello mushrooms stuffed with spinach and tossed in a bacon vinaigrette with pine nuts, sun-dried tomatoes and Parmesan cheese; baked Austrian brie topped with a Creole honey mustard sauce, and Cajun fried soft-shell crab topped with a white rémoulade.

One of the wait-staff's most recommended appetizers is Mauby's shrimp scampi. For this specialty, Showers broils half a dozen fresh gulf shrimp in a garlic and butter sauce that is simply swimming in spices with an aroma that makes you think you're in the middle of the French Quarter. The shrimp are



Crepe du Mer, with lobster and bay shrimp, in a rich brie cream sauce

plump, hot and flavorful and, combined with a small portion of vegetable rice, set the table perfectly for one of Mauby's main courses.

Most of the restaurant's regulars, however, start off their meal with "Mauby's Famous Oyster and Artichoke Soup," as it is printed on the menu. This thick and rich soup is one of the features that could likely result in revolt if left off the menu one day.

As for main courses, most regular diners know Mauby's for the steak. In fact, part of Mauby's reputation has been built on the quality of the restaurant's steaks, which are hand-cut daily. The most popular steak on the menu is the filet mignon, which is served topped with lump blue crabmeat and artichoke hearts and finished with a béarnaise sauce. This meal is hearty and satisfying and is a solid example of the quality fare regular diners have

come to expect at Mauby's.

Other steak choices on the menu include a 12-ounce black Angus New York Strip served with Dijon Au Poivre with cabin stacked potatoes or piggyback with fried oysters, and a pan-seared ribeye topped with a sun-dried tomato compound butter.

Much of the seafood on the menu is prepared in the Cajun style that was a part of Mauby's early history. Cajun fried soft shell crab topped with a white rémoulade and the fried crab claws—the best in town according to Rountree—are among the best examples. However, other dishes, such as the trout amandine are firmly planted in Alabama epicurean tradition.

The trout amandine has become a favorite at Mauby's through the years, particularly with the female clientele. Showers starts the dish with a piece of North Carolina farm raised trout, which





## THE DETAILS: *Mauby's*

ADDRESS: 121 OAK STREET, CRESTLINE  
PHONE: 870-7115

DINNER: SEVEN NIGHTS A WEEK,  
5-10 P.M.  
TRADITIONAL SUNDAY BRUNCH,  
11 A.M.-2:30 P.M.

RESERVATIONS ACCEPTED  
GARDEN DECK DINING  
AVAILABLE FOR PRIVATE PARTIES

is fried and accented with a mixture of lemon juice and extra virgin olive oil. The trout is served with a seasonal vegetable, such as fresh green beans and carrots and roasted red new potatoes cooked to the perfect temperature, lightly crispy skin on the outside and warm and buttery-soft on the inside.

The light and flaky fish combined with the creamy red potatoes is a meal that adds a sense of history and place to this corner establishment. Trout amandine is one of those special dishes that have been served in neighborhood restaurants and lunch counters for generations throughout Birmingham and Mauby's version easily ranks among the city's best.


Despite this firm grasp of Birmingham's culinary history, Rountree and his staff aren't content to simply live in the past. He and Showers are constantly devising new creations to add to the menu. The grilled marinated New Zealand lamb chops, served over Parmesan risotto, and the baked Atlantic sea bass with seared bacon-wrapped sea scallops are illustrative of the restaurant's innovation.

One of Rountree's favorite newcomers to the menu, however, is a dish called Mauby's Stack. This dish calls for boneless chicken breast medallions and beef tenderloin medallions layered with portobello mushrooms, roasted red bell pep-

pers and Alabama fried green tomatoes from Harvest Glen Market located down the street. The stack is then finished with a Choron sauce.

"This is something that we've done lately and has become very popular. It's not only delicious but it really makes a great presentation," Rountree says.

The wine list at Mauby's is not overwhelming, but it does contain a variety of vintages suitable for any meal. To accompany the filet mignon, the staff recommends one of three California red wines; a glass of the Liberty School Cabernet, a Foppiano Merlot, or the MacMurry Ranch Pinot Noir. With one of the seafood selections, solid choices include the Sonoma Cutter Russian River, the Tiefenbrunner Pinot Grigio of Italy, or either the La Joya Reserve Sauvignon Blanc of Chile or the Nobillo Sauvignon Blanc of New Zealand.

Not only does Mauby's serve hungry diners in the area, but also the community at large, as a strong neighborhood business should. Each Christmas Eve, Rountree and his staff host a party for the shelters that house battered women and their children, gifts and even a visit from Santa Claus. This kind of community stewardship along with its comfortable, elegant and charming atmosphere, makes Mauby's a treasured community jewel. 

Carolyn's Famous Carrot Cake

