

Cousino's Navy Bistro Glistens at The Docks

Following in the Cousino family tradition of fine restaurants, Tom and Eileen opened Cousino's Navy Bistro as the first restaurant in the area now known as The Docks. Former Mayor Carty Finkbeiner notes, "In the mid 1990's, the City was looking for a restaurant owner to start the revitalization process on the east side of the Maumee River. Tom Cousino was the first one to step up and take the risk of opening a business there. Tom saw the promise of developing The Docks."

Navy Bistro is open for lunch and dinner seven days a week, with an expansive brunch buffet every Sunday from 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. It is a great place for the business community to cross the river and meet for an important luncheon, relax with a glass of wine or cocktail after work, or hold an important dinner meeting. It is also a wonderful place to meet friends and to take out-of-town guests to show off downtown Toledo. My visitors have always been impressed with the food, service, and ambience. And when it's warm enough to sit on the patio or at the outdoor bar, I feel like I'm on vacation.

All foods on the extensive menu are available at any time. This is particularly nice when you want a sandwich or fancy salad at dinnertime. Most appetizers (\$8.35 - \$10.55) are enough for a lunch-size meal. Consider Spinach Artichoke Pizza or Grilled Portabella Mushrooms with honey-ginger and Stilton cheese. My favorite is Baked Brie topped with caramelized almonds, and served with thin apple and French bread slices.

There are several soups – with their house-special Navy Bean & Seafood Chowder at the top of the list. Tuscan White Bean with kale and sausage was a recent soup du jour – hearty and flavorful on a cool evening.

Salads (\$7.75 - \$16.45) include the very popular Wedge with crisp iceberg lettuce, Stilton cheese, bacon, and creamy parmesan vinaigrette. My favorite is Pistachio Crusted Chicken with caramelized onions (divine) and avocado vinaigrette (tangy). If you have the same hang-up I do about tomatoes, please ask your friendly and knowledgeable server to tell the kitchen to leave them off your salad selection.

Several vegetarian sandwiches are all the rage, especially the Vegetarian Hye Roller with sun-dried tomato pesto, cucumbers, mushrooms, sprouts, and Muenster cheese. Turkey Reuben, Southwestern Turkey Burger, and Turkey Smoke Stack are popular with those who are looking for something a bit out of the ordinary.

All steaks (\$13.55 - \$29.55) served at Navy Bistro are USDA Choice aged, and personally selected and cut by their butcher. Corporate chef Daniel Cutchall and executive chef Anthony House honor a fine lady in Toledo's history with the Lois Nelson Special. It is a petit Cajun filet mignon complimented with golden fried shrimp. Their Coriander Encrusted Rack of New Zealand Lamb (succulent) with port wine jus, served over garlic mashed potatoes (extra-yummy), is one of my favorite Navy Bistro dinners.

Seafood (\$17.55 - \$20.55) is a specialty, of course, at Navy Bistro. Seafood Platter is a customer favorite – a fine combination of friend jumbo shrimp, lake perch, tender scallops, and calamari strips. Lobster Tail is always available at market price.

If you have to take part of your meal home to have room for dessert – please do. Your congenial server presents the famous tower of desserts and offers tempting descriptions. Key lime pie and bread pudding are special treats, nicely prepared at Navy Bistro. My favorite continues to be their crème brûlée, a custard of egg yolks, white sugar, and heavy cream. Just before the chilled dessert is served, sugar is sprinkled on top and caramelized with a hand-held torch. Another moment of chilling, a few perfect berries, and voilà – the perfect dessert.

Wines (\$18.00 - \$305.00) are always special at Navy Bistro and Eileen's Wine Bar (an exceptional room just inside the main door). Their wine list is extraordinary and helps enlighten your palette with featured wines of the month. In May, two Spanish red wines were presented with perfect descriptions – “bursting with personality” and “sweet aromas of toffee” – Caño de Bajoz, Toro, and Casa de la Ermita, Red Crianza, Jumilla. Navy Bistro will present its annual wine dinner on Monday, June 6, at 7:00 p.m., featuring the Roederer Portfolio.

Meetings, banquets, and small private parties are welcome in Cousino's many large and small rooms, and the catering team is equipped to take care of your every need.

Navy Bistro is the result of Tom Cousino's dream to have an upscale nautical-theme restaurant in a special location. As it says on the employment opportunities page of their website, “What's made Cousino's Restaurants the Best in Toledo? It's simple – we hire people with the creativity, passion & enthusiasm to settle for nothing less than the best.” I have found this to be the case at Navy Bistro where the atmosphere, food, and service always glisten.

Cousino's Navy Bistro, at The Docks, downtown, east side of Maumee River
419-697-6289 CousinosRestaurants.com
Monday – Saturday 11 a.m. – 11 p.m. Sunday 11 a.m. – 9 p.m.

article by D. Ellen Critchley
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