

Food & Drink

Middletown's Camps: A Bit Of Nostalgic, If Twisted, Comfort Food



Camps in Middletown offers upscale comfort food with a classic Americana backdrop. [Read more here.](#) (Suzie Hunter)



By **Leanne Griffin** • Contact Reporter

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With a menu of "twisted comfort" food, décor harkening back to the mid-20th century and a projector playing old silent movies along a wall, Camps is hoping to bring a bit of Americana to Middletown's restaurant row.

The Main Street eatery, in a massive, two-story space that once housed Us Restaurant, Titanium Lounge and Firehouse Steakhouse, takes its name from another previous occupant: the R.W. Camp clothing store of decades past. Co-owners David Kania, who also owns the building, and Yaz Sheriff, who serves as general manager, celebrated the restaurant's grand opening in February.

Camps' menu lists plenty of "rib-sticking favorites."

"We want [guests] to enjoy the kind of comfort food their grandmother used to make," says Sheriff. Classic comfort fare includes plates like chicken pot pie with flaky pastry, fish and chips, a bacon-wrapped meatloaf served over mashed potatoes with wild mushroom gravy, and a traditional shepherd's pie with ground beef, potatoes and corn baked in a skillet. "Deep dish" items feature more skillet entrees, like Camps mac and cheese topped with cornbread crumbles, shrimp and spicy sausage grits, Hawaiian grilled chicken with teriyaki glaze and pineapple and pesto pappardelle with sun-dried tomatoes.

Other dishes employ creative spins, like a chili dog poutine, which swaps the French dish's traditional brown gravy and cheese curds for housemade beef chili, cheddar cheese sauce and miniature hot dogs. "We say, 'Please make sure you share it, because it's quite a big portion,'" Sheriff says, laughing.

"Totchos" leave tortilla chips behind in favor of crispy tater tots, layered with cheese, chipotle black bean pico de gallo and jalapeños. Fried chicken and waffles are served with apple maple compote, along with a side of maple syrup, and a "twisted Caesar" salad adds kale to the greens, with a smoky dressing and garlic grilled cornbread croutons. Snacks are \$6 to \$12; salads are \$8 and \$9 and sandwiches and entrees are \$9 to \$20. Desserts, like an apple crumble, s'mores bread pudding, whoopie pie and crème brûlée cheesecake, are \$6 and \$7.

Brunch, which began in late March, is available both Saturday and Sunday, with a variety of omelets (like the New England, with lobster, caramelized onion and Gouda); sandwiches with hand-cut french fries (an 8-ounce burger, ultimate grilled cheese with roasted tomato and pear, BBQ pulled pork with jicama slaw) and breakfast entrees, including a lobster quiche, eggs Benedict, and burrito with choice of sausage or bacon. Items are \$9 to \$14.

Camps offers several draft beers and wines by the glass, but its specialty is craft cocktails (\$9 to \$11), Sheriff says. The bar features several housemade liquor infusions, and popular drinks include the I'll Be Your Huckleberry, with huckleberry-flavored vodka, black currant liqueur and basil-infused simple syrup and the Camps Cucumber, with Prairie cucumber vodka, Wild Moon cucumber liqueur and dill-infused syrup. Some cocktails almost double as desserts, like the Mousse Tracks with chocolate liqueurs and housemade chocolate mousse, and an adult root beer float, with Not Your Father's alcoholic root beer, Wild Moon birch liqueur, cardamom bitters and vanilla ice cream.

The restaurant makes good use of its ample space, with string lights hanging from the high ceilings and modern graffiti art juxtaposed with historical framed photos. A film projector broadcasts silent movies starring Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin along one wall, along with classic TV shows like "Mr. Bean." The venue's second floor, with a balcony and its own bar, allows for plenty of special events, including "paint nights" and LGBT gatherings. It's also available for private parties.

Camps, 412 Main St., Middletown, is open Tuesday through Friday, 4 p.m. to 1 a.m., Saturday, 10 a.m. to 1 a.m. and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. 860-343-9756, campscomfort.com/blog.

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