

good taste

dish on dining



Rather than go on yet another diet this year, my husband and I decided to try to just eat healthier; toward that end, we have begun buying more organic and natural foods, which are fairly easy to find these days. To us, this means buying meat and chicken that has not been injected with hormones, fruits and vegetables that have not been sprayed with insecticides and breads that are not filled with preservatives and countless unpronounceable artificial ingredients. The biggest surprise has been our discovery that these foods actually taste great—far better, in fact, than their artificial, mass-produced counterparts. For example, the breads and cookies we've purchased from **Big Sky Bread Company** in Mountain Brook Village are fabulous. Our favorite is their whole-wheat three-seed bread that consists of just a few ingredients: freshly ground 100-percent whole wheat, water, honey, sunflower seeds, sesame seeds, poppy seeds, salt and yeast. That's it! This bread is also notable for what it doesn't have: saturated fat, cholesterol, preservatives, processed sugar and oils. Other breads available are plain whole wheat, white bread and rye bread; in addition, Big Sky makes oatmeal raisin and peanut butter cookies and Swedish tea rings. I asked owner Jeff Pierce how the bread stays fresh for so long (we leave ours in a bread box), and he told me that the honey acts as a natural preservative. He and his wife and co-owner, Patti, have quietly owned and operated the independent Big Sky Bread Company for 12 years and sell their wares locally to Bruno's, Publix, V. Richard's and select Piggly Wiggly's. They also ship their products to natural food stores throughout the Southeast. "Our secret is using good ingredients," Pierce says. "We stone-mill about 600 pounds of wheat flour here every day, with wheat we get shipped in from Montana." Big Sky Bread Company is at 2812 Cahaba Road in Mountain Brook Village, next to Bromberg's. Call 870-1935.

After several frustrating delays, **Cocina Superior**, sister restaurant to Superior Grill on Highway 280, finally opened its doors on February 28 in the former location of East City Grill next to Brio in Colonial Brookwood Village. Featuring "modern Tex-Mex" cuisine, the restaurant boasts an open kitchen, allowing diners to watch their dishes being prepared. Cocina Superior's sleek interior seats almost 300 and includes a colorful bar, palm trees, colored tiles and festive hanging lamps. Customers also may dine on the patio outside. My husband and I visited on opening night, a Wednesday at 6 p.m., and there was a happy, boisterous crowd including families and people unwinding in the lounge. For us, there were two standouts on the menu. The Cocina's ostones, recommended by our server, was a generous portion of baked oysters on the half shell topped with garlic butter and cheese. It was served with a small loaf of bread and roasted pico salsa. Our server told us that Chef Jess Bourgeois, a New Orleans native who formerly worked at Commander's Palace, specially created this luscious dish. We were also mighty impressed by the shrimp fajitas; huge shrimp were butterflied open on a bed of hot sautéed onions and green peppers, with the usual accompaniments. Cocina Superior offers a children's menu, party packs and catering. Call 259-1980 or visit www.thecocinasuperior.com.

Just in time for spring, the new **Furnace Masters** restaurant has opened at Tannehill Ironworks State Park. The original Furnace Masters burned to the ground several years ago. Specializing in country cooking and seafood, the restaurant is rustic and inexpensive, perfectly complementing an outing to Tannehill. On Saturday and Sunday, a breakfast bar is offered, and there's a seafood buffet on Friday and Saturday nights. The restaurant is open Tuesday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m., Friday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Call 477-7707. —BY BARBARA WESTLAKE-KENNY

If you have restaurant news, including openings, closing, new menus, change of chef or ownership, etc., please email Barbara at micscat@aol.com or call her at 205/629-7247. Because Birmingham Magazine is published monthly, a lead-time of at least five weeks is requested.