



# COLD FUSION RESTAURANT AND BAR

BY RICH BELMONT

No doubt most students at the University of Wisconsin Platteville think of Cold Fusion Restaurant as a good bar for burgers. After all, the burgers are excellent. They are 8 oz. ground top sirloin, except for the vegetarian walnut burger, and the bar sells over 2,000 of them every month.

However, foodies know this place is so much more than a burger joint. The restaurant's name should give you a clue: FUSION! How fortunate we are to have a restaurant specializing in Fusion Cuisine right here in Platteville, WI. Fusion Cuisine combines elements of different culinary traditions into one eating experience. The tastes of different cultures are mixed together to provide us with new and sensational flavors. Obvious examples of fusion cuisine are Taco Pizzas with Italian pizza crusts and Mexican taco ingredients and Tex-Mex combining the flavors of Texan cooking with those of Mexico.

Cold Fusion Restaurant and Bar offers American contemporary cuisine fused with international flavors. The tastes of many cultures are represented on the rather extensive menu. This is done purposely so there is something for everybody.



Cold Fusion opened on August 21, 2013 and is owned by Executive Chef Joe Perkins and his wife Vanessa Berg, MD, a native of North Dakota who is an Obstetrics and Family Practitioner and is associated with Southwest Health in Platteville.

Joe is originally from Maine but moved around a lot because his dad was a US Navy career sailor. So Joe was raised mostly in Virginia Beach and Richmond, VA.

Chef Joe started working in a McDonald's when he was 16 and has now been in the restaurant business for 29 years. He did interrupt his restaurant career when he was a US Air Force Pararescueman during the Gulf War's Operation Desert Storm.

Chef Joe has accumulated a wealth of experience. He was a cook at Aldo's Ristorante in Virginia Beach. He worked for a time as a Kitchen Manager and Chef for Little Caesars Pizza chain and was a Training Manager for Applebee Restaurants. He received undergraduate and master's degrees from Virginia Commonwealth University while he was a chef at the Legend Brewing Company's Pub in Richmond. He then became Head Chef and Kitchen Manager at Sophia's in Richmond.

When Vanessa moved to Omaha to do her residency Joe followed and went right to work as a cook at Spaghetti Factory. He then became a Chef at Passport Restaurant in Omaha.

It's not only all this experience that makes Chef Joe eminently qualified to run a Fusion Restaurant but also the fact that in 1993 he became a Certified Master Chef (CMC). The American Culinary Federation (ACF) administers the prestigious professional chef certification program for American chefs. Certification is a combination of culinary work experience, specialized training in key management, nutritional cooking and sanitation. ACF Chef certification is the only certification of chefs recognized by the US Department of Labor as a trade/profession. Most corporate and hotel chain restaurants have certified chefs. Becoming a CMC is another thing altogether. There aren't too many CMC's. It's the highest level of achievement for an American chef and it is extremely difficult to earn the honor. A CMC candidate must first be certified as an Executive Chef and must then take a grueling and expensive eight day test. Candidates must demonstrate superior knowledge of classical culinary technique, exceptional skills in food preparation, and be well-versed in kitchen safety and sanitation.

Cold Fusion is in a building that has been home to 10 restaurants in 10 years. Many of them did not last 6 months. Before Cold Fusion the restaurant in its place was Miner's Sports Bistro and before that it was Gangster's Steakhouse. Chef Joe is grateful to the people of Platteville who have embraced the fusion cuisine concept. In August Cold Fusion will be occupying the building for two years. In fact it has become so popular Joe opened a second location in Middleton, WI 6 months ago and will soon open a 3<sup>rd</sup> close to Stoughton, WI.



Some of the Platteville location's success must be attributed to Stefan Klgora the Head Chef who has been cooking for 7 years and Stefanie Loftus who was



hired as a server and was quickly promoted to bar manager and then general manager.

There is a full bar and some exceptional signature drinks. For example, The Cold Fusion Bloody Mary is made with house-infused vodka and Bloody Mary mix, Worcestershire sauce, steak sauce, and pickle juice and garnished with pickle and olives. The Cold Fusion is a refreshing party drink containing Passion Fruit vodka, blue Curacao, a dash of lime and Sprite.



The appetizers are decidedly upscale. The Grilled Wings are delicious. They are prepared in a 3 step, 3 hour process. First they are boiled to shrink the skin, then they are grilled to cook them thoroughly and then fried to bring them up to serving

temperature. White Cheese Curds are lightly breaded. The Calamari is exceptional. The squid is hand-cut, breaded then flash fried. It is nowhere near fishy tasting or rubbery. The Maine Sweet Black Mussels are a real treat. They are sautéed in garlic and tarragon in a white wine and cream sauce.

Nachos can be ordered two different ways: traditional beef and chili tortilla chips topped with lettuce, tomatoes, onions and fresh jalapeños and melted mozzarella; or with white chicken covered in Alfredo sauce.

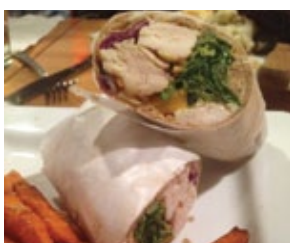
I particularly like the Fried Green Beans. Only Haricots Verts (ah-REE-koh ver) French green beans are used here. They are longer and thinner than most American varieties of green beans with a stronger bean flavor.



The burgers are popular and as you might expect a little bit unusual. The Pesto Burger is topped with pesto and mozzarella. Chef Joe's pesto is different because basil, pine nuts, lots of garlic and olive oil is combined with a little spinach and parmesan cheese. The Southwest Burger is topped with bacon, Pepperjack cheese and Joe's own spicy BBQ sauce.



The personal size Flatbread Pizzas are made on crusts of Tandoori Naan. The Naan is a traditional flatbread baked in Tandoor ovens in India, Turkey and other Eastern countries. It is not uncommon to have Naan as a pizza crust but Cold Fusion's toppings are certainly unusual. One has diced chicken, roasted red peppers, mozzarella and pesto. Another has crab claw meat with Alfredo sauce. Still another has buffalo chicken and blue cheese crumbles.



The tortilla wraps are also out of the ordinary. The Buffalo Chicken contains buffalo sauce, bacon, tomatoes, lettuce and blue cheese wrapped in wheat tortilla. The TBCLT stands for turkey, bacon, cheddar, lettuce and tomato. Margie really enjoyed the Asian Wrap containing diced chicken, feta cheese, almonds, shredded cabbage, mandarin oranges and chow mein noodles with an Asian sesame dressing.



Paninis are only served during lunch time. There are eight of them. The most popular are the Campagnola with baked chicken breast, roasted red peppers, pesto, mayo and mozzarella and the Italiano with pepperoni, salami,



roasted red peppers, pesto, mayo and mozzarella. On my next lunch visit I am going to order the Rio with roast beef, fresh jalapeños, tomatoes, spicy chipotle mayo and Pepperjack cheese.

The Pasta dishes are all really good, too. Gary Olsen, a new member on my tasting team, really enjoyed the Stuffed Shrimp Scampi: large crab stuffed shrimp are served over linguini with Alfredo sauce or with Hot Naked

The Bourbon Street Medley is the most popular pasta. Shrimp, chicken and andouille (ahn-DOO-wee) sausage are tossed in a spicy Cajun Alfredo sauce with penne pasta.

Master Chef Joe's culinary talents are gloriously showcased in all his Fusion Entrées. The Pork Tenderloin is a seldom seen 14 oz. two bone-in chop pan fried in white wine then oven baked then topped with a mango chutney glaze.

The chicken entrée consists of two free range chicken breasts marinated in a Korean BBQ sauce. This sauce is Joe's special sweet and spicy teriyaki mixed with Sriracha.

By the way, all the entrees are served with Naan, house salad and your choice of straight cut fries, garlic mashed potatoes, sweet potato fries or ratatouille basmati rice. I recommend the rice. Ratatouille (rat-a-TOO-ee) rice contains carrots, squash and beets. The beet juice adds the color so it is the most requested side. Who can resist pink rice?



The Machaco Ribeye is coated with a ground Guatemalan coffee rub. When it is grilled the coffee forms a delicious crust. Then it is topped with peppers and onions stewed in a heavy cream and crushed red pepper sauce.

The Saturday Night Special is Prime Rib. It is supplied by Weber Meats, Cuba City, WI. It is roasted low and slow after being coated with Master Chef Joe's own onion rub made from onion, olive oil, basil, cheese, garlic and salt.

The extraordinarily flavorful Baby Back Ribs are definitely my favorite dinner. First they are splashed with rice wine vinegar and then rubbed with Joe's special blend of spices. They are then placed in a pan with liquid smoke and baked for 5 to 6 hours. Then they are glazed with a tasty caramelized BBQ sauce and topped with a mango relish. Master Chef Joe prepares his special relish from fresh mangos, onions, dry basil, red and green peppers, minced garlic and vinegar. He has prepared his ribs from the same recipe for 23 years and has won awards in many BBQ contests.



Of course you should not finish a spectacular Fusion dinner without dessert! Currently you have two choices and they are equally good so I like to order one of each. They are the super chocolaty Ultra Chocolate

Cake and the Lemon Berry Mascarpone. The latter is a delicious cake with interspersed blueberries in two layers separated by a superb lemony mascarpone cheese creamy filling.

When you are in the mood for something different and not just the same old meat and potatoes visit Cold Fusion Restaurant and Bar. Internationally flavored American cuisine in Platteville, WI - Imagine that!

## COLD FUSION RESTAURANT AND BAR

92 E. Main Street, Platteville, WI 53818

608-348-7170 • ColdFusionRestaurant.com

**Bar Hours:** Sun-Thu: 11 AM-Midnight; Fri-Sat: 11 AM-1 AM

**Kitchen Hours:** Sun-Sat: 11 AM-10 PM

**Dining Style:** Come as you are

**Noise Level:** Loud

**Recommendations:** Grilled Wings, Fried Green Beans, Calamari, Mussels, Burgers, Buffalo Chicken Pizza, Roast Beef Sandwich, Asian Wrap, Italiano Panini, Bourbon Street Medley Pasta, Baby Back Ribs, Southwest Chicken, Mango Pork Tenderloin, Machaca Ribeye, Ultra Chocolate Cake, Lemon Berry Mascarpone Cake

**Liquor Service:** Full Bar, The Cold Fusion, Fusion Bloody Mary

**Prices:** \$6.95-\$23.95

**Pay Options:** Cash, Debit, Check, All Credit Cards

**Accessibility:** Front Door Ramp & Restrooms

**Kids Policy:** Menu, Boosters, High Chairs

**Reservations:** Yes (except 1<sup>st</sup> come, 1<sup>st</sup> served on Wed Burger Night)

**Catering:** Yes • **Take Out:** Yes • **Delivery:** No

**Parking:** On Street - Municipal lots east & west of building