

# Morel Greets Oktoberfest

Even before Thanksgiving and Christmas, Oktoberfest begins the holiday season for fine food lovers. Morel's Chef Fredy Mayer and his wife Paula have brought back their traditional Oktoberfest delights and added them to their exceptional standing menu and daily specials.

Morel is located at a convenient location and regulars know exactly where to find these culinary rewards. But newcomers may not. At 3809 South Tuttle Avenue, the entrance to Morel is restrained and low key in the European manner. An impressive doorway blends in among the small retail stores along Tuttle Avenue, just north of Bee Ridge. Once you find it, however, you won't forget it. Parking is extremely convenient and always available during the dinner hours.

The interior of Morel is pleasantly inviting. First time visitors may do a double-take, recalling the busy street and shopping center traffic from just moments before. The comfortable interior is pleasing and relaxed. Silverware is meticulously arranged across crisp linens, and sparkling reflections from

the china and glassware beckon diners to enjoy the experience. If the interior is inviting, it is matched or exceeded by the welcome of co-owners Paula and Chef Fredy Mayer (at those moments he can get free from the kitchen). At Morel, a customer receives the same loving care as does the food. It is a perfect match.

Oktoberfest brings to the tables of Morel those four favorites so popular with patrons this time of year: the Sauerkraut, the Hunter Style Veal Chop, the Pork Filet with Potato dumplings and the fabulous Butcher's Platter with its Sauerkraut, Smoked Pork Loin, Veal Sausage and Bratwurst. These are the robust dishes in which diners can certainly revel at least occasionally, more if they are so inclined.

Morel's menus reflect a philosophy of fine food that has always been the foundation of Chef Fredy's kitchen: absolute quality, absolute freshness and a preparation manner that has been time tested. Paula Mayer observes that Chef Fredy has almost an obsession with freshness, especially among the seafood selections and vegetables ob-

tained locally. Since Chef Fredy has also been observed casting a line from a boat in Little Sarasota Bay, there is a natural question that comes to mind. "No," he says smiling, anticipating the request. "I never take a fish to eat. I have plenty of excellent fish that I obtain from the better local sources. I always return a fish to the water after catching it. It's the sport I like."

So, if Chef Fredy's personal catch isn't on the menu, Morel diners can anticipate the wonderful fish entries they do find, generally on the sizzling Daily Specials. The bill of fare on any evening might also tempt you with mainstays of Continental Cuisine like Rack of Lamb, Grilled Filet Mignon, Muscovy Duck Breast and Pork Tenderloin. The appetizers are delightful. Like the Lump Crabmeat Wonton Skin Ravioli with Shiitake Mushroom, with a leek sauce.

Desserts leave no room for dissatisfaction. The Warm Apple Tart and Bittersweet Chocolate Terrine with toasted pecans and vanilla sauce have completed many a happy dinner. And the Warm Challah Bread Pudding is

only somewhat sinful, and an absolute reward for having chosen Morel for your dining.

Chef Fredy and Paula take a special delight in greeting their regular out-of-locale patrons from Siesta Key, Longboat and even further. Chef Fredy's kitchen mastery and the hospitable atmosphere of this fine restaurant make it worth the drive.

Morel will be open on both Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. "We'll also be open on Christmas Eve this year," Paula comments. "It's on Saturday evening and we can't disappoint people who count on us being open Saturday evenings." Daughters Alexis (an up-and-coming veterinarian) and Marina (at the New England Culinary Institute) understand this dedication. Customers have grown to appreciate it.

Morel. 3809 South Tuttle Avenue, Sarasota. 941.927.8716. Tuesday Through Sunday, 4:30 pm til 9:30pm. Reservations Suggested.

*Kit Graves*