

dining out

Singing the Blue

Bakery is in touch with its roots, but has added a new shine

At first glance, Blue Moon Bakery doesn't appear to have changed significantly over the past 20 years.

A closer inspection reveals more breakfast options, additional sandwiches and wraps — many with a Southwestern twist — and some stunning weekend breakfast specials have been added the past 4½ years by partners Alan Fusco and Kim Nelson.

Prior to that, Blue Moon owners Kay and Mike Gresham had developed a loyal Brookside following with their homemade breads, European-style pastries and breads. Mike Gresham died in 2004, leaving the bakery's future in doubt until Fusco stepped in.

Kay Gresham then acted as a consultant to the new owners, keeping the bakery's ownership intact.

"We've been taking baby steps, but I think we have put our signature on it a little more," Fusco said. "We're not going to go crazy with the menu, but it is refreshing to do some new, fun stuff once in a while."

Fusco's latest project has been the Saturday-Sunday brunches, incorporating the regular menu with a few specials. We stopped in on a recent sunny Sunday to check it out.

One of the specials that was about as perfect a breakfast dish as you could imagine. It was served open-faced on an English muffin with layers of poached eggs, three asparagus spears and five pieces of shrimp topped with a taragon hollandaise sauce that was good enough to eat with a spoon.

Blue Moon Bakery

3807 S. Peoria Ave.
749-7800

Food: Deli, bakery

Price: \$5.25 (breakfast wrap) to \$7.95 (roasted red pepper quesadilla)

Credit cards: All major

Hours: 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday

Food: ★★★

Atmosphere: ★★

Service: Mostly self-serve

Only the tender ends of the asparagus were used, the shrimp had a firm texture and fresh taste, and a light touch with the tarragon, which has an anise-like flavor, gave the hollandaise some interest. The dish was garnished with a sliced strawberry.

We also shared a breakfast wrap — with a couple of alterations — off the regular menu, which is posted on a blackboard. The basic wrap (\$5.25) includes red cabbage, green chilies, tomato, scrambled eggs, salsa and pepper jack cheese rolled in a whole-wheat tortilla.

We substituted provolone for the pepper jack, put the salsa on the side and added black beans (75 cents) and avocado (\$1.25). The result was flavorful and satisfying, and the black beans and fresh avocado were well worth the extra charge.

The weekday lunch menu features about 20 sandwiches and wraps, such as the Blue Moon with cream cheese, olives, tomato, cucumber, cheddar cheese and sprouts on your choice of bread; and the Fresco wrap with turkey, Swiss cheese,



One customer says the "ultimate" veggie burger, an occasional lunch special, is the best one since the heyday of the Middle Path restaurant in the 1970s. Blue Moon's has chickpeas, cilantro, onion, sprouts, lettuce, bread crumbs and a secret sauce on a homemade onion bun.

Photos by TOM GILBERT/Tulsa World



Assorted pastries from the Blue Moon Bakery.

lettuce, carrots, avocado, cabbage and red pepper sauce on a whole-wheat tortilla. Salads include a spinach and strawberry with feta cheese and a poppy seed dressing. Lunch prices range from \$5 to \$8.

Blue Moon offers an array of breakfast pastries and cookies, including an almond raisin roll, Cherry Street morning bun, lemon ricotta muffin, sticky icky icky and chocolate chunk cookies.

The bakery also has a small takeout menu that includes such items as quiches, soups, hummus, tabouli, banana bread, salsa and cheddar-garlic dip.

Diners order at the counter, and food is brought to the tables.

The dining area is cozy with 13 tables, plus four bistrot seats at window counters and two outside tables.

On the front door is the image of a man in a crescent moon with the saying, "Oh to be full." The dining room is painted in shades of blue, except for two bright, multi-colored tables in the middle, and usually has works of local artists on display.

Recently that was a series of photos of Fusco's youngest son, Sam, a high-school senior.

Soothing jazz music, appropriate for a Sunday

morning, was playing in the background, and Fusco said on other days selections include everything from classic rock to modern alternative.

"My three sons keep up with the independent music scene of today, which is great," Fusco said. "It helps keep you young."

Fusco said he and Nelson, who was out of town on the day of our interview, also have talked about doing a dinner one night a month and calling it Once in a Blue Moon.

"We will do a fixed-price deal, bring out the Hasty-Bake and have some fun," Fusco said.

Trippin'

A trip down the back hall and into the bathrooms at Blue Moon Bakery can be a real trip for those of a certain generation of music lovers.

In the hallway is a photo of a young Jerry Garcia carrying a guitar case down the streets of San Francisco.

In the women's bathroom is an original "Hair" poster from the 1960s, a "Wake of the Flood" poster and a photo of Joni Mitchell when she played at the Oklahoma City zoo in 1980.

In the men's bathroom is a large montage of sports figures, mostly taken from Sports Illustrated, and the most interesting item, a poster dated Feb 6 for the only Tulsa performance by the Grateful Dead. Froug's Department Stores was the major sponsor of the Tulsa concert at the Fairgrounds Pavilion, and reserved-seat prices were \$8.50 and \$9.50. The poster didn't show the year.

"I think it was around 1978," said Blue Moon co-owner Alan Fusco. "I know I was out of high school when I saw that concert."

Fusco said he personally took the photo of Mitchell in Oklahoma City, and his parents took him to the "Hair" show in New York City when he was in about the sixth grade.

Fusco is no relation to Tulsa chef Michael Fusco, although both have New York backgrounds. Alan Fusco was born in Brooklyn, and his parents moved to Oklahoma City when he was in elementary school.

His grandfather and parents were bakers in New York. Fusco said he had stints at Tippi's Restaurant and Pie Pantry and at the Interurban restaurants before acquiring Blue Moon Bakery.

