

Dining Out: The Lazy Beagle in Livingston Manor

Livingston Manor eatery high on comfort food

By Kelly Kingman

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The Lazy Beagle is a comforting place to escape a bitterly cold night; it's warmly lit, and its butter-yellow walls and wide plank floors are homey and inviting. The entire place is decorated in a circa 1900 lake lodge style, with oars and antlers on the walls and a pair of old skates dangling.

Most of the menu and the day's specials are written on a large chalkboard that dominates the room; another smaller board displays the day's garden harvest. This evening the garden has yielded pumpkin, acorn squash, kale and three kinds of potatoes.

The wine list is modest, but the beer selection rescues it, featuring several New York breweries including Ommegang and a selection of Belgians. There's one cocktail, amusingly named Beaglejuice (\$8), that consists of sweet tea and lemonade spiked with citron vodka. I opt for a glass of Jacob's Creek cabernet (\$7) and scan the menu, which is divided into dinner entrées and pub fare, though the two spaces aren't really separate — the bar is nearly the center of the large, open dining area.

The Lazy Beagle Pub & Grill

Cuisine: Gastropub, eclectic

Where: 2 Pearl St., Livingston Manor

Hours: 5-9 p.m. Wed.-Thurs.; 5-10 p.m. Fri.; noon-3 p.m., 5 p.m.-10 p.m. Sat.; 11:30 a.m.-3 p.m., 5 p.m.-9 p.m. Sun.

Call: 439-3405

Visit: www.lazybeaglepub.com

Ratings (out of four stars)

Food: 3 ½

Service: 3

Ambience: 4

Dishes range from the familiar comfort food of bangers and mash with peas and gravy (\$10) to chicken skewers with peanut ginger glaze and wakame salad (\$8). For a starter, I choose the Cajun calamari with lime-cilantro aioli (\$10), which arrives delectably hot and crispy, the peppery batter light and crumbly. The aioli had been drizzled over the hot squid, which caused it to melt away somewhat, but the flavor was still excellent.

I debate between the pan-seared chicken with onions and mushrooms in an Irish whiskey cream sauce (\$18) and the Guinness-braised brisket (\$19). Our server helpfully explains that some people find the brisket rather fatty for their taste, and while it's not my particular concern, she gives the chicken her hearty endorsement. I choose the garlic mash (over rice pilaf or sweet potato fries), and it arrives with a medley of steamed veggies, which are a bit overcooked. The chicken is tender and juicy and the sauce pleasantly nutty but bordering on too sweet. While tasty, the dish begs for contrast — something acidic or spicy to stand up to the creaminess — and there isn't enough garlic in the potatoes to do the trick.

The shepherd's pie (\$10) that my companion orders is perfect. The hearty beef, pea and carrot hash topped with a mashed potato crust arrives in a ceramic oval baking dish — easily enough for two. The meat had a deep note of red wine, and the mash is fluffy and just a bit crisp. Hot and hearty, it's deliciously warming.

As our meal draws on, I notice that our waiter hasn't checked in — she finally does as we almost finish our mains — but we are attended now and again with water or offers of takeout containers by other servers. Service, then, it seems, is a team effort.

After a rather long intermission, our server comes to offer us dessert. We heed her recommendation and try both the apple crumb pie (\$6) and the blueberry turnover (\$6). The pie is on the sweet side for my taste, but the strong flavor of clove brings some nice spice, and it's piled with fresh whipped cream. I fear the blueberry turnover would be too breakfast-y, but it turns out to be the better of the two. The warm, wild blueberry-filled pastry disappears quickly between the two of us.

Go hungry for hearty comfort fare and you won't be disappointed here, and the prices are easy to digest, too. A perfect place for a crowd and the kids, the Lazy Beagle offers a small selection of standard children's menu items. It hits the right notes with quality ingredients and tried-and-true flavors.