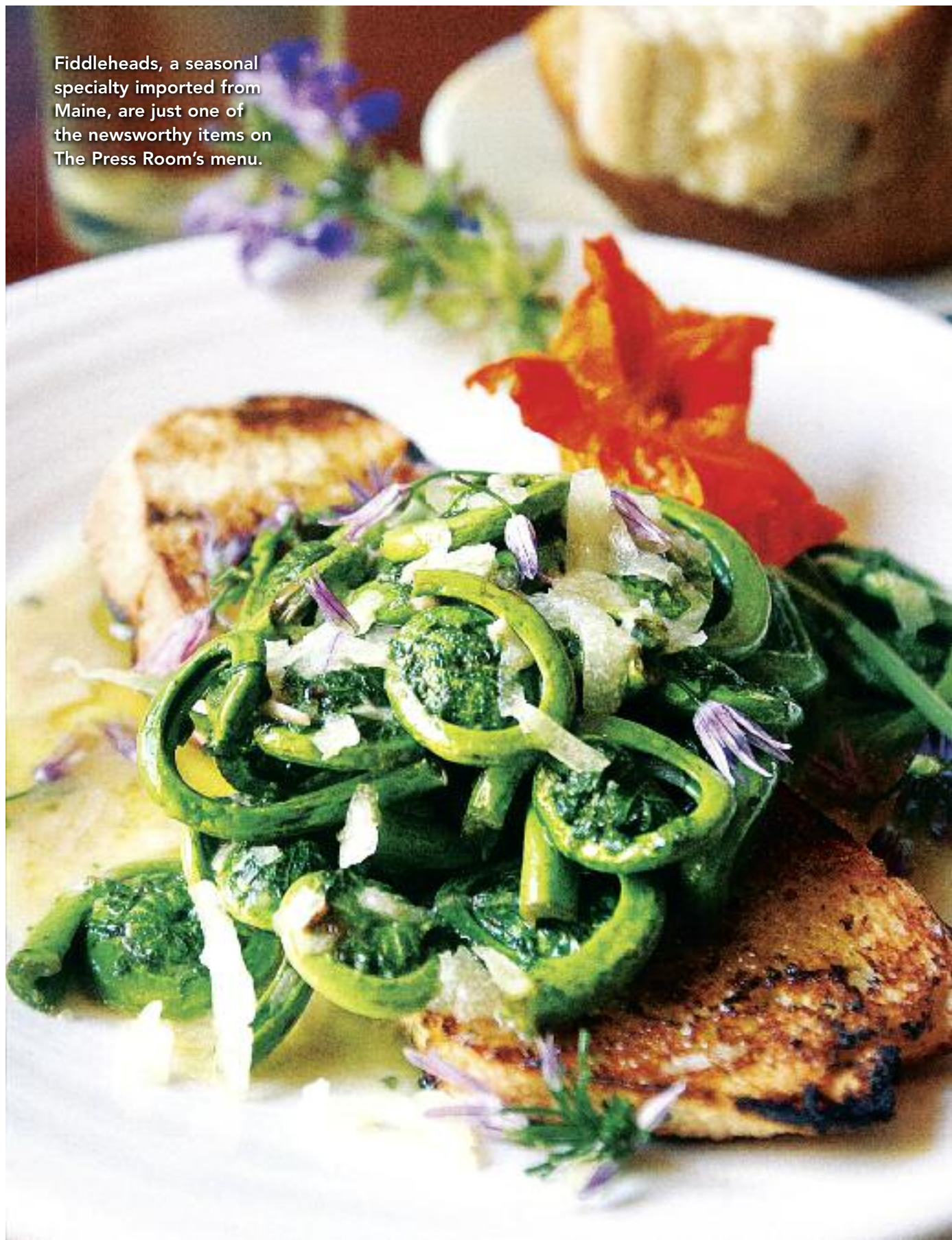


Fiddleheads, a seasonal specialty imported from Maine, are just one of the newsworthy items on The Press Room's menu.



Extra, Extra! Read All About It!

The Press Room Covers a Broad Range of Seasonal Specialties and Year-Round Favorites

BY KATE McDERMOTT ✱ PHOTOGRAPHY BY TURNER PHOTOGRAPHY STUDIO



IN ITS HEYDAY AS THE HOME OF SHEPHERDSTOWN, W.VA.'S *INDEPENDENT* NEWSPAPER, THE BUILDING THAT NOW FEATURES THE PRESS ROOM RESTAURANT would likely have been a dark, loud and dingy place. The odor of ink would have permeated the space, while the incessant clicking of typewriters could only be drowned out by the roar of the printing press.

Fast forward some 100 years. The same space is now an intimate and welcoming restaurant that oozes charm, from its exposed brick walls and original fireplace to the wide-plank wood floor in the bar area. The sound of typewriters has been replaced by the soft crooning of Frank Sinatra and the pungent smell of printers' ink

has been erased by savory aromas that emanate from the kitchen. (Interestingly, the newspaper's presses were actually located in the area that now *is* the kitchen.)

Owners Michael and Deborah Luksa purchased the circa-1790s building in 2004 and opened the restaurant in 2006. You might say they are Shepherdstown fixtures. Michael was the head

chef at the popular Yellow Brick Bank Restaurant a few doors away for many years and Deborah has owned the German Street Coffee & Candlerly down the street for almost two decades.

HOT OFF THE PRESSES

From its menu to its décor, The Press Room succeeds in being trendy without being pretentious.



Above: The caprese salad at The Press Room features house-made mozzarella cheese and julienned basil fresh from the restaurant's on-site garden. **Right:** A full bar features a large selection of wines, beers and cocktails, including festive summer specialty drinks.

“Our goal has always been to focus on our customers’ desires and to keep our prices reasonable,” says Michael Luksa. The most expensive regular entrée on the menu is the seafood paella at \$24, with most other entrées averaging about \$19. The Press Room’s menu is quite varied. There are fish and seafood dishes, such as salmon with a balsamic glaze and grilled sea scallops served with a wild mushroom risotto, but diners can also find a grilled duck breast with duck confit hash or fork-tender pork Milanese served with a rich lemon, butter and parsley sauce.

Appetizers include everything from a house pate to a Press Room customer favorite: fresh oysters on the half shell. A chalkboard in the bar lets diners know where the day’s oysters hail from, which on the evening we visited

included Prince Edward Island and Massachusetts. “We offer fresh oysters year round,” Luksa says.

But for some items on The Press Room menu, timing is everything. Luksa takes great pride in offering seasonal specialties, such as ramps. A well-known delicacy for many West Virginians, this vegetable that is best described as a relative of leeks or scallions is grown in the wild and harvested by locals.

Then there are fiddleheads. So named because the curly greens resemble the head of a fiddle, Luksa regularly checks in with his grower in Maine to find out when these sprouts of the ostrich fern will be ready for harvesting—and thus ready for a place on his menu. Somewhat similar in taste to asparagus, fiddleheads are served with

shaved Manchego cheese atop a grilled piece of the restaurant’s house bread and beautifully garnished with flowers and herbs from the eatery’s on-site garden.

START SPREADING THE NEWS

Diners waiting for a table or just interested in wetting their whistles will find the bar area at The Press Room to be as charming as the restaurant. With its rich wood floors and antique bar fixtures, it’s a great place to enjoy a cold beer—or scotch straight up, a la Lou Grant. Instead of bowls of somewhat stale bar nuts, artfully arranged plates of marinated



Fork-tender pork Milanese is panko-crusted and served with fresh aragula and rich, creamy homemade mashed potatoes.



With only 15 tables and maximum seating for 50, reservations are always a good idea when hoping to dine at The Press Room.

plump olives grace the bar top, there for patrons to enjoy while they sip their libations.

Sitting in the bar at The Press Room, it is easy to see the connection between the space's previous home as the source of local news (with some gossip thrown in as well) to its place in the local culture today as a place that some might liken to Shepherdstown's version of *Cheers*.

Just ask Jeanne Muir and Jim Ford. They are, by their own admission, Press Room "regulars." They visit often, both to enjoy the food but also to catch up on what's new around town. As proprietors of the Thomas Shepherd Inn Bed & Breakfast just down the street, Muir says they enjoy having someone else dote on them for a change. "Once you've cooked breakfast for a lot of people, you don't really want to do a lot of cooking for yourself," she says. They enjoy Lusk's appreciation for

seasonal specialties, and the way in which he lets the food do the talking. "I like the way he presents the flavors of food without hiding it," Muir adds.

Whether it's the rich blend of flavors and textures featured in the restaurant's roasted beet salad with gorgonzola cheese or the bright colors and fresh-from-the-farm tastes of a berry shortcake served on a poppy seed biscuit with local berries, The Press Room delivers a dining experience that is definitely newsworthy.

The Press Room is located at 129 W. German St. in Shepherdstown, W.Va. The restaurant is closed on Tuesdays. Dinner is served from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesday and Thursdays, and from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. Sunday brunch is offered from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. before the restaurant opens again for dinner at 4 p.m. For more information, call 304-876-8777. FM

GAZPACHO

Serves 6



INGREDIENTS:

- 1 clove garlic
- 1/2 small red onion
- 1 green bell pepper
- 2 cucumbers, peeled and seeds removed
- 1 28 oz. can whole plum tomatoes
- 24 oz. tomato juice
- 1/2 cup red wine vinegar
- 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1 and 1/2 teaspoons Tabasco sauce
- 1 and 1/2 teaspoons tarragon
- 1 tablespoon parsley
- Salt and pepper to taste

In a food processor, add garlic, onion, pepper, cucumber and plum tomatoes. Process to a chunky consistency. Transfer to a bowl and add remaining ingredients. Chill for two to three hours.

Serve with croutons or grilled bread.