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## Restaurant 3 has a Southern taste

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By Corinna Lothar - The Texas-rub rib-eye steak at Restaurant 3 is worth a trip to Arlington. The steak is tender and flavorful, and the Texas rub lends it spice without inhibiting the flavor of the meat.

The steak, with a crisp and crunchy coating, is served with a ragout of baby potatoes, artichokes and asparagus, an unusual complement. It's a superb treatment.

Almost as good is a dish of scallops and grits, an appetizer large enough to be a main course. The scallops are fresh and buttery, a perfect foil to the mild, slightly crunchy grits, which are lightly flavored with Asiago cheese. The dish is topped with chopped tomatoes and small cubes of Tasso ham, which seems out of place.

Greg Cahill, his wife, daughter and son-in-law, opened Restaurant 3 on Clarendon Boulevard in Arlington in the fall. About 40 years ago, Mr. Cahill opened Whitlow's restaurant in downtown Washington and prospered until redevelopment crowded him out. He moved Whitlow's to Arlington.

Mr. Cahill's third time out — Restaurant 3 — is clearly a charm. It is a large, pleasant space, divided into three rooms. Booths face a large bar at the end of one room. A main dining room is adorned with paintings of country scenes reminiscent of Tuscany. A third dining room, small and narrow, has a wood-burning stone fireplace.

Brian Robinson is the chef, assisted by sous-chef Sean Mooney. Mr. Robinson is a third-generation Washingtonian who has cooked in several local restaurants, including Georgia Brown. His dishes tend toward American comfort food, with strong Southern overtones, including a side of hoppin' john, that Dixie dish of black-eyed peas cooked with a ham hock.

First courses include a curious dish of potato chips covered with blue cheese and bacon, as well as grilled brie cheese with fruit and a savory fruit sauce. More traditional are fried oysters, flash-fried calamari served with a tzatziki sauce, and a soup of the day.

The crisp romaine lettuce in a Caesar salad was nicely dressed, but the Parmesan basket on which the romaine rested was too tough to be cut with a serrated knife.

There's beef aplenty among Restaurant 3's main courses. Although the rib-eye is the star, there's a good filet mignon served with spinach; and braised short ribs accompanied by collard greens and macaroni and cheese. A lamb shank and a tender cider-brined pork chop served with an apple relish round out the meat dishes.

Duck breast, although tender and cooked to order, had little flavor. The potatoes and shreds of

sauteed onion melt into a sweet-sour fruit-based sauce, well conceived to accompany the duck.

Seared tuna, Japanese sea bass, fried catfish and grouper make up the fish selections. The tuna is served with rice and black beans, and the sea bass comes with squash risotto. The grouper is combined with a mix of shrimps, scallops and artichokes, as well as grits, and the catfish is fried and served with a lemon cayenne aioli sauce.

For vegetarians, Mr. Robinson prepares eggplant stuffed with spinach orzo and roasted tomatoes.

Chocolate bread pudding with a warm white chocolate sauce is somewhat heavy, albeit tasty. Blood orange sorbet is lighter on the palate. Or try the yeast doughnuts served with a chocolate coffee sauce.

Restaurant 3's Sunday brunch includes a Carolina Low Country breakfast of eggs, grits or potatoes, and country sausage or bacon. An interesting version of eggs Benedict is served on corn bread.

Dishes that fall closer to lunch than breakfast include a pulled duck sandwich, a catfish po' boy sandwich, sesame crusted tuna salad, and gumbo.

Restaurant 3 takes its wines — mostly from California — seriously. The several excellent wines by the glass are a bit dear, but they are poured with a generous hand.

RESTAURANT: Restaurant 3, 2950 Clarendon Blvd., Arlington. 703/524-4440.

HOURS: Dinner 5 to 10 p.m. Sunday to Thursday, until 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday; brunch 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday

PRICES: First courses \$6 to \$11; main courses \$15 to \$28; desserts \$6 to \$14; brunch \$9 to \$14

CREDIT CARDS: All major cards

PARKING: Limited street parking; paid garage parking next door; free parking a block away in the DHS Building, 3033 Wilson Blvd. from 5:30 p.m. to 2:30 a.m. weekdays, after 8 a.m. Saturday and 10 p.m. Sunday

ACCESS: Wheelchair accessible

METRO: Clarendon

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