

Two Rivers Lodge earns top restaurant ranking

By **GARY BLACK**
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When it comes to the best restaurant in Fairbanks, you have to go outside Fairbanks.

Two Rivers Lodge, a restaurant rich in Alaska ambiance and big on food, took first place in this year's Readers' Choice contest as best restaurant overall, marking the first time in its existence the lodge ranked in the listings. It also nabbed second place in the fine dining category.

"I'm tickled pink and very excited," owner Jon Burns said. "It's great to be recognized."

Burns and his wife, Kim, have owned the lodge at 16 Mile Chena Hot Springs Road for six years now, though it's

been in existence for about 18 years. Over the years, it's gone through several different owners before the Burnses took ownership of it.

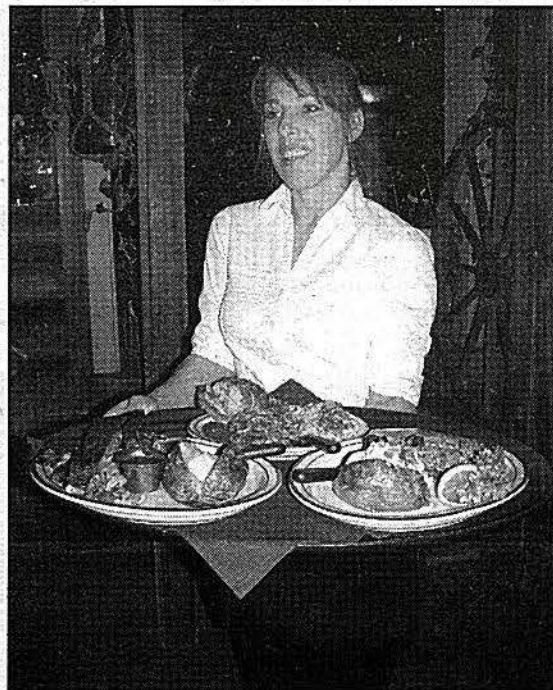
Burns runs the kitchen and is lead chef most days, putting his years of culinary experience to good use. "I've been cooking in Fairbanks since 1983," he said. When he's not in the kitchen, he's in the restaurant's lounge greeting diners as they walk in. "I like to treat everyone like family," Burns said.

The restaurant is a mix of Alaska lodge surroundings complemented with fine dining fare — think big steaks, succulent seafood and chicken dishes. Burns cuts the steaks himself, and the 16-ounce slab of steak you order is a monster on the plate. Coupled

with a baked potato, and soup or salad, it's more than enough for your meal as you'll likely be taking some home."

Two Rivers Lodge boasts a full wine list, well-stocked bar and most of the desserts at the lodge are homemade on the premises. One event Burns has started is hosting wine and beer pairings with dinner. He's even hosted a whiskey pairing, serving aged libations with the meal. Burns also has started hosting themed dining nights, the most recent of which was for Cinco de Mayo. On Mother's Day, the lodge offered an elegant menu of prime rib and prawns or prime rib and king crab, and a brunch menu consisting of prime rib, stuffed

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**Server
 Melissa
 West, of
 Two Rivers,
 brings out
 an order
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 took first
 place in this
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TWO RIVERS

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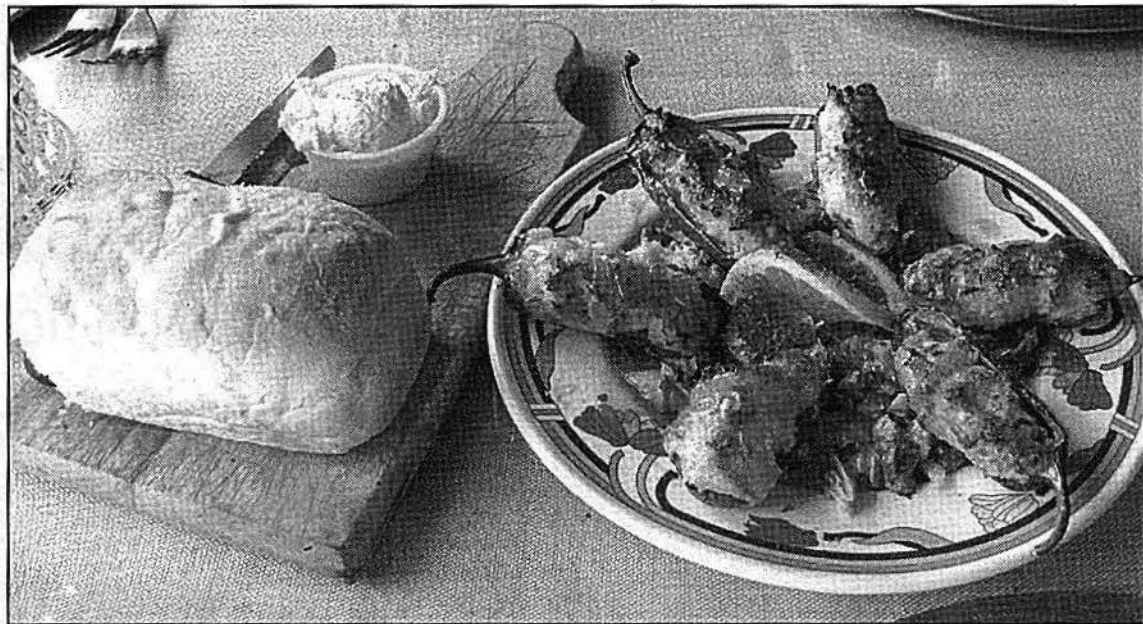
pork loin, chicken fettucine, tilapia Olympia, mashed potatoes, eggs Benedict, a French toast casserole and numerous desserts. In about three weeks, he's hosting a Greek wine dinner.

The lodge itself is rich in Alaska decor: high ceilings, wooden walls and a deck that's well used in the summer that overlooks a small lake. Its rustic feel gives you a very Last Frontier impression. The lodge is undergoing a little bit of renovation, with improvements being made to increase the atmosphere while you take in the surroundings.

And while the decor and atmosphere might be changing a little, Burns has no plans to alter the menu.

He's sticking with what he knows.

"Most of the recipes I use I learned from the old chefs in town," he said. "A lot of places don't cook this way anymore."



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