

# Alton Restaurant Week: Great Rivers Tap and Grill is an unexplored gem

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**ALTON** - While its location inside the **Atrium Hotel** in Alton may not seem like a destination for locals, **Great Rivers Tap and Grill** is serving some of the best food for **Alton Restaurant Week**, and every other week, too.

**Chef Kenny Jaskiewicz** and **Food and Beverage Director Matt Jones** worked to make this year's restaurant week fare phenomenal. For the \$10 lunch special, which continues throughout the day, patrons are allowed to select a starter or dessert with their entree. It also comes with choice of coffee or tea. The \$25 dinner special includes one entree and choice of starter or dessert, plus a choice of coffee, tea, draft beer or glass of house wine.

The lunch starters include treats crafted by Jones and Jaskiewicz, including smoked salmon deviled eggs or bacon and cheddar pierogis, inspired by Jaskiewicz's Polish heritage. Entrees include bison sliders, wedge salad or Basin Street burger. Desserts are a choice between apple crisp or gooey butter cake.

Jones said all menu items are made from scratch, using local ingredients when possible. He said he and Chef Jaskiewicz worked tirelessly before restaurant week to perfect the bison sliders, which are not normally on the menu. The finished product is served on a house-made potato bun with a sauce made from caramelized onions and aioli. The finished product has a garlic butter glaze with a touch of mayonnaise. The two sliders are served with a garnish of beet chips and kale.

"We worked on them until I almost couldn't look at protein again," Jones said. "We decided to garnish them with something colorful that people would still enjoy eating."



**Sales Director Jacinda Dunlap** said the restaurant works to make menu items reflect the great rivers, for which the restaurant is named. She said everything from Cajun favorites of New Orleans to Polish-inspired dishes from the northern reaches of the Mississippi River are presented to patrons.

The \$25 special, she said, is only \$2 more than the usual price of the entrees, for significantly more food.

"We have a lot of regulars who come in here for the grilled ribeye, which is normally \$23," Dunlap said. "For just \$2 more they can get a side or dessert as well as a glass of wine or a draft beer."

Great Rivers Tap and Grill has a wide selection of craft beers, including Alton-brewed A-Town Brown from Old Bakery Beer Company, among many other hard-to-find brews from across the region.

The entrees included with the \$25 special for restaurant week include a choice of duck breast fettucine, fish and chips or grilled ribeye with garlic Parmesan steak fries. The entrees include the same starters as lunch, with the addition of a wedge salad, as well as the same desserts.

One of those desserts, the apple crisp, has a simple filling of apples, brown sugar and a stick of cinnamon, made fresh by Jones. It is served piping hot with a dollop of vanilla ice cream slowly melting on top.



Dunlap said the restaurant at the hotel has been participating in Alton Restaurant Week since it began six years ago. This year is the second time it has done so as Great Rivers Tap and Grill, the first being during the All Star Restaurant Week held last July. Dunlap said the week has always been successful for the restaurant, saying more Altonians come to dine during those weeks.

The tap room will also be hosting its third annual **Battle of the Beers and Vine Off** on Thursday, Feb. 9 from 5:30-7:30 p.m. During that event, five local beer and wine distributors will battle it out for the titles of "Best Beer" and "Best Wine". Patrons are invited to sample the entries and cast a vote. Winners will be featured at Great Rivers Tap and Grill following the event, which is free and open to the public (assuming someone is 21 years of age or older).

For Valentine Diners, the restaurant is hosting a \$25 per person prime rib special Valentine's Evening, as well as a \$6 dessert for two and a \$15 per person panko shrimp special. Reservations are recommended, and dinner is served from 5-9 p.m. that night.

Great Rivers Tap and Grill is located at 3559-B College Ave. in Alton.

A complete list of all 21 restaurants participating in this year's restaurant week can be found at <http://www.visitalton.com/feature-stories/detail/60/alton-restaurant-week>