

# THE BERKSHIRE BOOK

2nd  
Edition  
Fully Revised

## A COMPLETE GUIDE

### Great Barrington

#### CASTLE STREET CAFE

528-5244

10 Castle St., Gt. Barrington.

Closed: Tues.

Price: Moderate to expensive

Cuisine: American, French, Italian.

Serving: D.

Credit Cards: D, MC, V.

Special Features: Crivinet wine bar.

**A** new gem in Great Barrington's crown! Chef-owner Michael Ballon has transformed a previously jinxed restaurant space into one of the liveliest and most consistently satisfying eating establishments in Berkshire. The decor is straightforward upscale bistro with *de rigueur* exposed brick walls, white linen tablecloths, fresh flowers and a handsome, inviting bar at the back of the dining room — a great spot for a cool drink late on a summer's night or a hot toddy after the movies at the nearby Mahaiwe. The bar is equipped with a *crivinet* to keep several special wines fresh even though opened: a nice touch for diners who may want only a glassful but who want some-

thing better than standard restaurant house wine. Table service is top-notch — attentive, well informed and prompt. Unlike many other sophisticated restaurants which turn away the dessert and coffee crowd, Castle Street treats everyone with the same warmth and welcome.

A principal ingredient of chef Ballon's excellence is his reliance on the best local suppliers for everything fresh — from goat cheese to French bread to produce. The menu tips its hat to these Berkshire provisioners by listing them prominently, a friendly custom we'd like to see more often. Even on busy nights, the Castle Street chefs find time to schmooze with the crowd, affording diners the opportunity to ask about certain dishes or offer a word of praise. There is much here to applaud.

The eclectic menu combines French, Italian and American influences, sometimes in traditional dishes like *Cassoulet* (from southwestern France) and sometimes in more adventurous dishes like Eggplant *Roulade*, stuffed with three cheeses, an entrée one might associate with the new cuisine from California. Flavor, color, aroma and all-around zestiness characterize the cooking here.

Vegetarians and carnivores alike have a good range of choices. On our many visits we have enjoyed entrees such as perfect *Fettucine Alfredo*; the Three-Cheese Eggplant *Roulade* with a pungent tomato sauce inside; and pasta with wonderfully fresh jumbo shrimp. Some of the side dishes — the Zucchini Fritters and the Sautéed Broccoli — even outdo the entrees.

The dessert list proves again that less is more. Avoiding the temptation to dazzle its patrons with a long list of desserts, Castle Street offers a modest array of uniformly excellent sweet treats. Consider the Chocolate Mousse, which *Nizeshdu* declared "the world's best." But you might also try one of our favorites, humbler but possibly more satisfying: Castle Street's Apple Crisp.

Castle Street is not inexpensive, but we've always felt it to be a great value, extremely fine fare for a fair price. For its superior food, reasonable prices, and extraordinarily convivial atmosphere, Castle Street rates as one of Berkshire's very best.