

?Caribfusion? a hit once again at Goodlot Brewery

Written By KIRA WRONSKA DORWARD

Goodlot had lots of soul on Sunday June 23, as the brewery and patio opened for a special ?Caribfusion? brunch event presented by Soulyve. It was a perfect summer's day for two such unique and talented companies to come together, all in the spirit of community building and providing patrons with an ?irie? time.

Desiring to break the traditional ?restaurant? mold, Soulyve Founder Phil DeWar have branched out into catering and events since closing the popular Orangeville restaurant. A long partnership with Goodlot, whose beer Soulyve was the first restaurant to serve, resulted in a relaxing and uplifting reggae-themed afternoon at the Brewery's patio, located near Alton.

An all-organic four course menu was served to performances by Errol Blackwood and the In-Jah Band, who opened with Bob Marley's ?One Love/People Get Ready.?

?I'd spent so much time on the other side, doing the cooking and not enjoying my time with the guests,? says Chef and Founder DeWar. ?It didn't allow for creativity, and I didn't have time for my family,? he explains about why he closed the restaurant in favour of an event and catering company. ?I wanted to create. I wanted to be a culinary artist?I wanted to step outside the brick mold [and] get away from the structure of the restaurant.?

DeWar, originally from Kingston, Jamaica, came to Canada as a young teenager and was formally trained at Humber College before starting Soulyve at 20. He came from a big Caribbean family, and fell in love with cooking at an early age. However, after closing his restaurant, DeWar spent some time thinking about how to reinvent his business concept by reintroducing his values and redefining what he did.

?I started the company at 20. At 33, I'm a different person with different values?this is my expression after years of being in the restaurant industry of how we should break bread, interact, and dialogue. And let's share that. We're a rhythmic people, and when we all quench those fires in our soul?look at this,? he said, indicating the aftermath of the brunch, as regular patio goers joined in the fun and the beat. ?This is what it's about, atmosphere. People are getting up and grooving.?

As for his particular style of food, which he describes as ?Caribfusion?, DeWar says he took a lot of the older, classic Caribbean peasant food, which had usually been repurposed with many herbs and added African flavour, and has added his own twist. ?Let's get the food on the plate! You get the community vibe, I call it community dialogue. Food is an international language that everyone speaks.?

That is certainly true, with Caledon embracing such a foreign palate. DeWar's food happened to go very well with Goodlot's beer, and a true partnership was born between the two companies. ?Phil is such a great community builder,? says Goodlot Founder Phil Winters. ?It was so devastating when Soulyve closed, that when he came to me with the idea for this event I said ?no need to ask me twice.' It was the greatest honour. From an artisanal standpoint, he's such a great culinary artist.?

Goodlot, though it has the venue, is not hosting many special events this summer. ?We have a regular routine,? says Winters, ?for Friday, Saturday, Sunday. We're not doing too much, we want to keep it low-key and community based?keeping it to your friends and family,? he half-jokes. ?We don't want to ruin a good thing.?

In the six weeks the patio has been open, Winters says they have been seeing a lot of regular customers. This is confirmed by Don DiStasi of Caledon Village, a patio regular and unofficial company spokesperson. ?It's a great atmosphere at the patio, with great service and staff, and it's unique. It seems to be there is a regular group of?beer patrons, we'll say, and we just happen to meet up [on the weekends]. It's an informal sort of thing. A few of us were the first ones through the Bottle Shop [the winter dispensary]?I've just enjoyed being with Gail and Phil, and they've let me help out here?it's more atmosphere than just showing up to a brewery.?

?It's the epitome of community,? his girlfriend Kate Hepworth adds. ?Just take a look at this.?

Goodlot's patio is open until October 15th, with hours of operation consisting of Thursdays and Fridays, 2-8, Saturdays 12-8, and Sundays 12-6. Phil DeWar will be cooking every second Sunday from 12-5 (somewhat weather dependent), along with other local chefs. DeWar will also be catering another event this summer to celebrate the retirement of his high school teacher Kevin Smith of ODSS at the Taragon restaurant on Highway 9, date TBD.

Winters is also hoping to turn Goodlot's stage into a regular thing. ?We're really a bluegrass venue as much as anything,? he says. ?We're happy to see the community having a good time and coming together. That's what it's designed to do.?