

Good Food. Isn't That The Point?

A chain renowned on the Shore arrives to delight taste buds here in Bergen.



If the best “B” thing about our state’s great Shore towns is “beaches,” surely “brunch” is also high on the list. Brunch is always on my mind when I visit Monmouth and Ocean counties, mainly because every trip around places like Long Branch and Manalapan usually ends with a meal at Turning Point. It’s a small restaurant chain serving knockout breakfast and lunch items in four states, and its northernmost location opened this spring in Paramus.

Tentatively, that was music to the ears of any Bergenite who’d dined at Turning Point. No longer would we have to trek down the Parkway to central or south Jersey for a bite of this eatery’s omelets, paninis or salads. But one burning question remained: Did the folks at the Bergen restaurant dish the same high-quality eats and exude the same charm as their brethren in other locales?

Like the cars whizzing past at the nearby junction of routes 4 and 17, a constant flow of patrons filed in and out for breakfast on a Friday morning. The interior resembled the layout of other Turning Point restaurants: very bright, multiple wings filled with spacious booths and tables. Décor was just as cheerful, and walls were covered with Bergen images (Van Saun Park’s carousel, for instance) photographed by local artists.

The menu features the same plates as other locations and also includes seasonal selections. It’s also not as overwhelming as a conventional, packed New Jersey diner menu. You’ll find the basics, such as short stacks and eggs Benedict for breakfast or chicken pesto panini and Cuban sandwich for lunch. But most who visit Turning Point come for the distinctive creations (strawberry cheesecake toast or bruschetta Benedict, anyone?) and healthful and vegan options.

My friend and I started with a pair of fresh juices: “Walk on the Beach” for me, and “Just Beet It” for her. Though its color was that of its main ingredient, carrot, my juice had flavors of orange taproot as well as apple, lemon, golden beet and ginger. “Just Beet It” was just as refreshing: It’s a perfect blend of fresh red beet, carrot, orange, apple and pineapple juices with a touch of ginger.

Our palates already pleased, we were excited for the salmon platter starter. Easily a meal for one, the deconstructed bagel with fresh lox is perfect to share. All the ingredients are picturesquely arranged on a wooden board: sliced lox, whipped cream cheese, fresh cucumbers and tomatoes, avocado, pickled onion and a toasted plain bagel.

A modest amount of everything seasoning was sprinkled on the cream cheese and veggies for added zest. Craving warm and fluffy pancakes, we also created a flapjack sampler with three varieties: lemon blueberry, cinnamon roll and fresh banana.

After all the sweet bites, I needed something savory, so I ordered the Southern chicken waffle as my main brunch item. The golden, crisp Belgian waffle was topped with thick chopped bacon and three crispy chicken strips coated with a sriracha hot honey breading. My order actually came with four piping hot chicken tenders, as our server, after accidentally allowing one of three strips to roll off the plate, quickly brought out a replacement piece plus one. The Turning Point’s take on a classic Southern dish is done to perfection: The sweet and savory flavors combined with the kick of the sriracha hit every taste bud in a good way.

The same could be said about my friend’s main dish, the shakshuka (aka eggs in purgatory). It’s modern spin on a traditional Middle Eastern dish, with three poached eggs floating atop a blend of spicy tomato sauce, peppers, onion, goat cheese and cilantro. After the eggs were broken, the yolk and tomato mixture combined into a creamy sauce that could be spooned or sopped up with the accompanying ciabatta bread.

I mentioned to my friend that her meal could easily have been ordered for lunch—the breakfast menu is available all day, after all. My own next order was already on my mind: Now that one of my favorite restaurants is just minutes away, I can easily try a customary lunch like the Martha’s Vineyard salad with fresh greens, seasonal berries and mango or the chicken bruschetta melt with grilled chicken, bruschetta and pesto on ciabatta. Mmm...how can I be hungry already?!

■ TURNING POINT, 65 ROUTE 4, PARAMUS, 201.345.4399; TURNINGPOINTRESTAURANTS.COM

—Darius Amos

