



RUSTIK RESTAURANT

offers up some winter comfort food

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ■ JAMES MACDONALD

Sunbeams slice across the walls, bouncing off mirrors, and filling the huge space with a warm, welcoming afternoon light. Driftwood and industrial light bulbs hang from the high ceilings creating a rural, steam-punk vibe. No other restaurant in Caledon, let alone Orangeville has such a beautifully unique and welcoming space. Yet Rustik is no ordinary restaurant. From its interior and kitchen, to its food and wine list, Rustik has claimed a niche in the Headwaters dining scene like few other establishments have.

According to Brett Jaggard, one of the owners of Rustik, the desire to open a place of her own was in the works for a while. "I knew I wanted to stay in the area and I had a certain kilometre radius to open up a place". When things began to come together, they did so incredibly quickly. Opportunities for the current space were quick and unexpected and the

turn-around to open in July 2014 was only three weeks, a fraction of the time it takes most establishments to get ready. "Sometime things work out that way," she shrugs, a modest understatement when referring to one of the most popular establishments in the region.

"We are right in the centre of where everyone is getting their products. This is the heart of the hundred-mile radius," Jaggard says. Mirroring a refrain often heard among restaurateurs in the region, though seldom fully realized. Rustik however has made it a mainstay of its day to day. "It is a part of our menu, a part of our philosophy, we want to do it 100 per cent, but it can be really, really difficult. We are going into winter now so things get hard, many more root vegetables," Jaggard reflects.

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Walking through the kitchen, it is a buzz with chefs new and old, assistants working on dinner prep, and the mid-day deliveryman dancing around the kitchen and out the back door. Carrot soup simmers slowly on the stovetop, gigantic yams are sliced and prepared, and boxes of fresh fillets are removed for the inevitable dinner orders.

The Headwaters food scene can be daunting. A bevy of fantastic restaurants and top-notch chefs, all vying for a relatively small dining population. Yet Rustik seems to have all that sorted out. Their food is daring, yet comfortable at the same time. Their wine list is impressive and growing. Yet, what seems to set them apart is their acknowledgment of the consumer. “The consumers are really knowledgeable about what they are eating, (and) what they want, so you have to provide that to them,” Jaggard remarks. “When we opened, we wanted to give the best quality food, at the best possible price. When people walk in the door, I want them to appreciate food as much as we do”.

It is that combination of fresh ingredients, a drive to deliver a unique and thoughtful meal and dining experience, coupled with a simple level of respect and love for food, that allows for this relatively young restaurant to set itself above the fold in the very competitive and growing Headwaters food scene.

