

## Fairport restaurant offers food like Grandma made

KAREN MILTNER • STAFF WRITER • SEPTEMBER 24, 2009

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WhatchaGotCookin, a family-run operation that has been promoting "home sweet home cooking" in downtown Fairport for several years, now begs the question, whatchagotsmokin?



WhatchaGotCookin at its new location in Fairport. (KAREN MILTNER staff photographer)

Barbecue had been on the original menu when Maureen Brainard and her chef-son, Joe Challenger, originally opened in the Box Factory building. But the site was barbecue-challenged (tenants didn't want to be tempted by the smell all day long), and 'cue was banished from the menu soon after opening.

This spring, Whatcha moved a few hundred yards west on the Erie Canal to a standalone house on Liftbridge Lane. The new spot, while hard to find for first-timers, gives the mother-son duo plenty of room to smoke. Barbecue is back.

Pork shoulder streaks, brisket, ribs and chicken smoked over hickory is a significant draw, and the pulled-pork sandwich slathered in vinegar-strong

sauce on a fresh knot bun was indeed a good reason to check out the new site. Served in a basket with potato chips, it would be the ideal lunch to eat outside at one of the full-service picnic tables that edge the Erie Canal path.

But in my mind, the other home-style cooking picks are the best reason to come to Whatcha now that the weather is getting cooler. The smooth, herby roasted butternut squash soup on the new fall-winter menu is perfect for the change of season. I wish I had eaten it with shepherd's pie, or mac and cheese, or a fried bologna sandwich. These are just some of the more affordable comfort food classics that I have enjoyed before.

If your budget is bigger than mine, try the full-fledged dinner plates. They are utterly inviting: beef stroganoff, braised short ribs over egg noodles, pork chops and apple sauce, bacon-wrapped meatloaf. These will put you back \$12 to \$18.

There is an irony that Challenger went to culinary school so he could cook like a grandma, but, regardless, he's got the touch. His mother, who runs the front of the house, has succeeded in giving Whatcha a distinct personality that is country casual without getting too kitschy. The chalkboard walls give kids (and parents) plenty of room to draw and scribble.

*Karen Miltner is our staff food writer. Between feedings, she can be reached at [kmiltner@DemocratandChronicle.com](mailto:kmiltner@DemocratandChronicle.com).*

### Karen Miltner

Karen Miltner has been the staff food writer for the Democrat and Chronicle since 2000. She lives in Irondequoit.



### WHATCHAGOTCOOKIN

**Address:** 10 Liftbridge Lane, Fairport.

**Phone:** (585) 377-7770.

**Web:** [www.whatchagotcookin.com](http://www.whatchagotcookin.com).

**Hours:** Lunch, 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Saturday; dinner 5 to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

**Accessibility:** Wheelchair accessible.

**Good to know:** Wine and beer coming back soon. Outdoor seating along the Erie Canal.

**What I ate:** Roasted butternut squash soup for \$3.50, pulled-pork sandwich and potato chips for \$5.95.

**Other good deals:** Hot lunch sandwiches all less than \$7,