



Emmleigh's of Taylor: The New Kid in Town

By Mary-Kathryn Millner
Photography by Dana Finimore



Hungry bellies have for years headed to Taylor for the famous catfish joint, Taylor Grocery. Today, there is a lot more going on in the tiny village just outside Oxford. Taylor has become known as a nook for artists but is also quickly becoming a destination for good food.

In addition to Taylor Grocery, diners now have the option of Emmleigh's Table, a home-cookin' restaurant that opened in the new Plein Air development in 2007. Serving comfort food at its best, Emmleigh's is owned and operated by John and Linda Fleming.

The Flemings' catering and bakery business, which also goes by the name Emmleigh's, has long been a favorite of Oxonians. Before opening the Taylor location, Emmleigh's in Oxford had become well known for its baked goods, excellent chicken salad and frequent catering work.

To-go lunches made from their chicken

salad, pasta and fruit-salad selections were easy and convenient and quite popular, so the Flemings added a hot bar and were preparing plate lunches, too. The downfall: there was no seating at the Oxford location.

"What really made us decide to do a second location was the business we were doing with the plate lunches at the location on University Avenue (in Oxford) but we didn't have any seating," John Fleming said.

With an eye out for a new location, the Flemings came across the Plein Air

Development in Taylor. After speaking with the developers and seeing the plans, they were sold. "We really loved the building they were building," said Fleming, noting the rustic hardwood floors, tall ceilings and exposed brick walls seemed just the atmosphere he was looking for.

Emileigh's Table was one of the first businesses to go into the development in its early days. Starting a new venture in such a new and out-of-the-way area may have made many people skeptical. But the opening of Emileigh's coincided with the opening of the Southern Living Idea House, which was unveiled in the development last year.

"With the opening of the Southern Living house, we knew we'd be okay for at least the first four months," Fleming said. The house has closed, but the good food and great atmosphere have kept the patrons coming back for more.

"Our risk is working out just fine," he said.

Emileigh's serves plate lunches (\$7.79-\$8.79) featuring mouthwatering vegetables and delicious entrees like meatloaf, chicken spaghetti, and chicken-and-sausage jambalaya.

"The food is kind of like eating at Grandma's table," Fleming said. Although the menu changes daily, a few staples remain the same each day: "We always have savory green beans, macaroni-and-cheese and creamed corn because folks will holler if we don't!"

The country food sometimes has a twist that reflects Fleming's culinary background; he is a graduate of Johnston and Wells Culinary School in Charleston, South Carolina. One example is the Chicken Wellington (\$8.79), a cream cheese-stuffed chicken breast in puff pastry that Fleming says is one of





the most popular items. Another favorite is the Mustard-and-Herb Crusted Pork Loin with Red Wine Gravy (\$8.79).

Each plate lunch is served with either cornbread or the special garlic-cheese biscuits, so cheesy and moist you'll wish you had two!

If you are in the mood for something lighter, they have recently added Greek Salad (\$7.79) and Club Salad (\$7.79). Or have the salad plates with your choice of chicken, pasta, fruit or various other salads are also available.

In addition to the mouthwatering lunches, Emileigh's serves a "down-home breakfast bar" (\$8.79) on Saturday mornings. If you go for breakfast, you'll be treated to fluffy biscuits, sausage or bacon, eggs, hash brown potatoes and garlic cheese grits.

If you have room for more, the counter usually holds several homemade cakes or pies, displayed under old-fashioned cake plates for those who have a sweet tooth (\$2.25-\$3.75).

Adding to the feel of being in an old-fashioned restaurant, food is

served on mismatched plates alongside glasses of cold iced tea. Different tables and chairs fill the room, each table set with a different set of unusual salt-and-pepper shakers. Large windows allow lots of light to fill the room, leaving it feeling as comforting as the food on the plate.

The Flemings have also begun hosting events at night, namely rehearsal dinners and private parties held in a new building. It has the charm and character of a building that's been around for decades. They still run the bakery and catering business in Oxford, too, so events are natural pursuits for them.

If you find yourself in Taylor or are looking for a reason to go, Fleming and the staff will greet you as friends. The food and warm welcome will leave you looking forward to your next visit. ■

Emileigh's
One Town Square Lane
Plein Air Neighborhood
Taylor MS 38673
662.236.7900
11 a.m.-2 p.m. Tues.-Sun.

