

Taste Test: Arizona Biltmore's New Frank & Albert's

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Sonny and Cher. Batman and Robin. Simon and Garfunkel. Add Frank Lloyd Wright and Albert Chase MacArthur, the inspiration behind Arizona Biltmore's new Frank & Albert's, to this list of dynamic duos.



What do you have to do at the Arizona Biltmore to get a restaurant named after you? Try being the team who designed and built the long-standing Phoenix resort. More than 80 years after the birth of the Biltmore, Frank & Albert's is now opened for business. Albert Chase MacArthur, along with his brothers, and Frank Lloyd Wright (also the muse for Wright's at The Biltmore) built and designed the hotel, respectively. And, now, hungry Phoenicians get to gobble up Arizona-inspired comfort fare in a restaurant inspired by them (think fried chicken and meatloaf with an upscale spin, plus the addition of local ingredients). The bill of fare features familiar names like Queen Creek Olive Mill, Schreiner's Farms and Black Mesa Ranch, alongside some of our state's finest beers, including selections from Oak Creek and Four Peaks.

Aesthetics-wise, Frank & Albert's doesn't interrupt the overall look of the Biltmore; however, it definitely exudes a more hip, laidback feel than the remainder of the landmark resort. Dark woods and hints of orange fill the contemporary dining space, with a standout feature being the clean-lined, supermodern fireplace. The adjacent patio also begs to be enjoyed, with its comfy chairs and yet another cozy and contemporary fire pit. Even the napkins and coasters at Frank & Albert's have a personality all their own. They read: "Yes, we will get fresh with you"; "Keep your friends close and your ingredients closer"; "Comfort food doesn't mean you can fall asleep on your plate"; and "You can get pretty thirsty building a hotel in the desert."

Before digging in to the main event, nibble your way through Frank & Albert's delectable bar bites. The loaded potato skins are worth a try, even if you've been tainted by the typical too-greasy, too-goopy variety. Frank & Albert's interpretation spotlights fingerling potatoes and applewood-smoked bacon. More unique bar fare includes the yummy, though nothing special, Desert Flat flatbread topped with chicken, figs, goat cheese and red onion marmalade, and the can't-gobble-it-down-fast-enough Not Mom's Meatloaf sliders. Featuring a sherry glaze and caramelized onions, this moist meatloaf was certainly not the ketchup-soaked kind that mom is known for. Another don't-miss bar bite was the organic smoked tomato soup, served with an itty bitty griddled cheese sandwich. Instead of sliced bread and Kraft singles, this small sandwich utilized white American cheese and house-made brioche.

Another spin on a culinary classic was the restaurant's organic celery Caesar salad. This salad stands out because of its use of celery—roots, stalks and leaves—instead of lettuce. The celery slivers are topped with toasted garlic dressing (one of the best Caesar dressings we've ever tasted) and delicious croutons. This was a truly refreshing variation on a typically heavy salad.

The entree menu features a mix of pizzas, flatbreads and both classic and Arizona-inspired comfort food. For a more good-for-you follow-up to meatball sliders and potato skins, the Queen Creek Olive Oil-poached Rocky Point grouper was an excellent solution. The meaty fish was mildly sweet, which was nice next to the orange reduction and thin bean-orange salad. Though the healthfulness stopped with the seafood dish, the herb-rubbed rib of beef, and its sides of buttered broccoli and a baked potato crusted in sea salt, was worth the extra hour at the gym. The dish was the pinnacle of the filling meat-and-potatoes dish that we all crave from time to time.

Next up, the Cheese, Mac and the Chicken was a table favorite. But, then again, would the combination of fried chicken, cheesy macaroni, creamed corn and a buttermilk biscuit ever not go over well? However, Frank & Albert's fried chicken was amazing, with its juicy meat and light, crispy skin (they might as well serve the skin as an appetizer).

For dessert, it doesn't get much better—or more comforting—than s'mores or a homemade chocolate chip cookie with milk. As such after-dinner delights take you back to your childhood, Frank & Albert's can't help but make you think of the roaring 20's, when the restaurant's namesakes joined to launch Arizona Biltmore.

Frank & Albert's

2400 E. Missouri Ave., Phoenix.

602.381.7632, www.frankandalberts.com.

Chef: Todd Sicolo.

Hours: Daily, 6-11 a.m. (breakfast); 11 a.m.-5 p.m. (lunch); 5-10 p.m. (dinner); 11 a.m.-11 p.m. (bar).