

All in the Family

Two years after establishing Malone's as one of Central Kentucky's premier restaurants, Brian McCarty and Bruce Drake were ready for more. The pair decided to stick with a location that worked and opened Oscar's, a seafood and piano bar, right next door to Malone's in Lexington.

The Oscar's concept came partly from the renowned Gibson's Steakhouse in Chicago and partly from Regatta, Drake's Lexington Green seafood restaurant, where he and McCarty first met. Gibson's (a favorite destination of Drake's and McCarty's) features an adjacent piano bar and Regatta has long offered nightly entertainment. The idea was to offer patrons top-quality seafood in the kind of jazzed up atmosphere live music creates.

"We felt like the piano and the upscale seafood (at Oscar's) complemented the steakhouse," McCarty said. "It's something that stands on its own and complements Malone's very well."

When business at Malone's and Oscar's began to bulge, McCarty and Drake were eager to find a new way to accommodate their nightly overflow. This time they decided to expand at a spot a little farther away — about 200 yards down the Lansdowne Shopping Center. There they opened Sal's Italian Chophouse and Harry's American Bar in August. The idea was to make Lansdowne a true dining destination.

"Look what Norman Brinker did with Macaroni Grill, Chili's, and On the Border. He owns all three of them, it's three different concepts, and he puts them within 100 yards of each other," Drake explained. "We believe people go in areas to shop and say 'Hey, we'll pop in Malone's; if they're busy, we may go over to Oscar's; if they're busy, we'll go down to Sal's; if they're busy, we may go to Harry's. Surely we're not going to go zero for four.' "

No matter where patrons end up, they will enjoy the same classy casual atmosphere that is Malone's hallmark. In lieu of a back wall, Sal's showcases its kitchen, complete with wood-fired ovens. The menu features Italian favorites such as gnocchi and ravioli, as well as several signature steak and chops selections. Like at Malone's, all of the beef offered at Sal's is USDA prime. The décor emphasizes wood and stone, and the lobby houses a 22-foot by 15-foot Maker's Mark wall, displaying some 400 of the famous red-waxed bottles. Each bottle has a "sponsor," with the proceeds benefiting The Race for Education, which awards college scholarship funds to children of horse industry workers and to those interested in pursuing a career in the horse business.

Next door, Harry's features state-of-the-art technology — plasma TVs, a jukebox with more than 100,000 songs — without sacrificing its neighborhood pub feel. Racing fans will certainly feel right at home at Harry's. The south wall of the bar is dominated by three tote boards displaying odds on three mythical Breeders' Cup races. [Man o' War (2-1) is slightly favored over Secretariat (3-1) in the Classic.] All the tabletops in Harry's show collages of Keeneland memorabilia as well.

Above Harry's and Sal's is Malone's Banquets. The space can hold a single party of up to 400 or can be divided into as many as nine individual rooms for smaller gatherings. Each room has 84-inch screens and state-of-the-art fiber optic audio-visual features, including satellite teleconferencing, which enables people to participate in meetings from anywhere in the world via satellite.

By Matt O'Neil

