

THIS MONTH IN

Orlando®

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The Parmesan-coated, fried brie is plenty for two, served with warm French bread for spreading, super-hot English mustard and fresh fruit (\$7.25). The hot cheese and spinach dip is a tavern favorite, spreadably smooth and dippable with warm tortilla chips and salsa (\$5.95).

Main selections range from shrimp to lobster pasta (tender morsels of sautéed Gulf shrimp and Pacific lobster tossed with linguine and a light and creamy tomato sauce, \$15.95), four varieties of oven-baked pizza (\$7.50) and chicken marsala (\$13.50). Entrée salads, including Caesar with grilled chicken or smoked Atlantic salmon, are enormous and served tableside by the restaurant's **efficient and friendly servers** (\$8.50 and \$8.95).

Sam's signature, however, is its oak-grilled specialties—steak, seafood, chicken and pork—cooked over an open flame using sea-

soned Black Jack oak, which imparts a delicious, smoky flavoring (\$9.95-\$24.50). Some may not care for the distinctive taste, however; while my husband loves the oak-grilled pork loin chops (\$16.95; \$10.50 for a single chop), he found the oaky taste overpowering in Sam's burger, a half-pound of certified Black Angus beef cooked to order and served with all the fixings, including fries (\$6.95). Another fan of the eatery's oak-grilled pork chops, says Casey, is Sam Snead himself, who stops by a few times each year en route to his South Florida winter home.

The restaurant's popularity has led to expansion plans; six Snead's restaurants are currently under construction throughout Florida. Locally, a downtown and a Longwood location are slated to open this spring. This summer, a freestanding Sam Snead's will open adjacent to Maitland's RDV Sportsplex.

While the key to Snead's success is consistency in food quality and service—paired with a menu that offers something for everyone—Snead's desserts are a major draw for savvy sweet-tooths. The hot apple crisp's flaky pastry, generous chunks of cinnamon-spiced fruit and cool accompaniment of vanilla ice cream is a favorite (\$5.35), as is the richly sweet and chock-full-of-nuts pecan pie, served à la mode and topped with Sam's bourbon glaze (\$4.95). But the hands-down, mouth-dropping dessert at Snead's is undoubtedly the chocolate sack—a dark, sweet chocolate container embracing a delectable center of sponge cake and white chocolate mousse with a pool of sweet-tart raspberry purée for dipping (\$7.50, and worth every penny).

And if all those elements weren't enough to make Sam Snead's a champion player in the restaurant biz, there's one more important ingredient here worth mentioning: the people-watching. This is a see-and-be-seen kind of place, especially around Bay Hill tournament time (this year's tourney runs March 13-19); and, if the restaurant's packed, they'll even serve you at the bar upon request if you don't want to leave the action!). Golf pros, fans, golf wannabes and other assorted "beautiful people" flock to Snead's, making it a great place to spend a few hours while enjoying a winning meal. *Sam Snead's Tavern, 2461 S. Hiwassee Road, Orlando; hours: Tues.-Sat., 11:30 a.m.-2 a.m.; Sun., 11:30 a.m.-midnight; Sunday brunch, 11:30 a.m.-3 p.m.; (407) 295-9999.* **ca**



Think chocolate can lower your golf score? Hey, anything is worth a try, especially when Snead's dessert of choice—the chocolate sack—is a sinfully sweet dark-chocolate box filled with sponge cake, white chocolate mousse and whipped cream, all served atop raspberry purée.