

RESTAURANT SHOWCASE

Showcasing the area's best restaurants

The Piggy Bank: 448 Main Street, Beacon

By Kimberly Ryerson

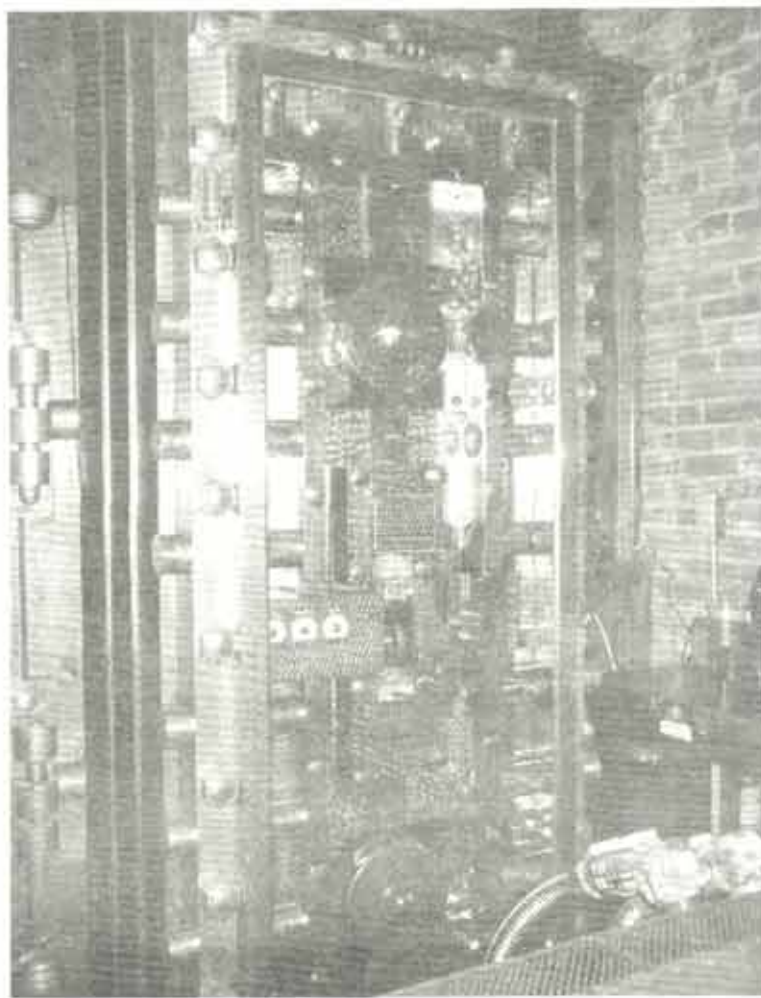
Doug Berlin didn't plan on opening a restaurant himself. An entrepreneur who works in the building restoration business in New York City, his goal was to renovate the space at 448 Main St. in Beacon, and then hire someone else to run a restaurant there. That was Plan A. After about six months of searching for a qualified candidate to take on this role, however, Berlin came up with a Plan B. And a Plan C. "I couldn't find anybody to take the space that was going to meet my criteria, so I said, you know what, why don't I do it? I'll open it up, get it going, and if I can't do it myself, I can always lease the space out." Turns out Berlin never had to go to Plan C. The Piggy Bank, which he opened in 2000, has thrived under his direction, which is impressive when you consider the fact that Berlin has no prior experience or formal training in the restaurant field.

What he does have is a love of barbeque, and this passion is part of what has helped The Piggy Bank, which specializes in gourmet southern cooking, to be successful from the start. "I'm from the south side of Chicago, where there's barbeque on every corner ... there was a barbeque trained sous chef who was looking for a job, so I got him to join as my chef," Berlin explains. To create many of the delicious meals served at The Piggy Bank, the cooking staff uses an authentic southern slow-cooked smokehouse barbeque. This allows them to infuse their dishes with what the restaurant's website calls "Real Q." Unlike the taste from backyard cookouts on the grill which we're all familiar with, "Real Q" flavor is produced from "the southern tradition of cooking meat in a closed chamber or in a smoke pit, over smoldering hardwood." This technique of slow cooking the meat at a low temperature, the web site goes on to explain, "renders all of the fat from the meat, as aromatic flavor from the wood is absorbed."

In addition to a variety of tasty barbeque selections, such as barbeque jumbo shrimp, pork, pork melt, or Carolina barbeque (pulled pork marinated in a mustard vinegar sauce) sandwiches, barbeque chicken, ribs, Texas Kettle Beef and home-style chili, The Piggy Bank features different dessert specials each week. If you're lucky enough to visit when they are serving their homemade Key Lime pie, you are definitely in for a tasty treat. Other delectable desserts include Mississippi Mud pie, Reese's peanut butter pie, cheese-cake and chocolate truffle served with vanilla ice cream. All of the various menu selections, which include vegetarian dishes as well as seafood, pasta, burgers and salads, are very reasonably priced. There's also a "piglet's" menu which offers kid-friendly fare such as chicken fingers, a classic children's favorite. As for Berlin's favorite Piggy Bank dish, "I can never get tired of eating ribs," he happily declares. "I like them smoked with just a little bit of barbeque sauce."

The building itself, constructed in 1880, has had a long and interesting history. Initially used for general merchandise, it was converted into a bank at the turn of the century, which it remained for approximately 80 years. It

was at this time that perhaps the most interesting feature of the space today, its namesake bank vault, was constructed. Located behind the bar, the vault now serves as the restaurant's wine cellar, as well as its architectural and conversational centerpiece. In 1980, the bank was sold and the building then became a low-grade 20-room boarding house. It remained one until 1995, when the city of Beacon shut it down due to a rather unique fire code violation—it seems that the owners were renting out the vault itself to tenants, in addition to the conventional rooms, in an effort to make a little extra cash. Ironically, this unconventional,



not to mention illegal, living space was considered the "luxury suite" of the facility, and as such, it was the most expensive room in the place. Berlin then acquired the building in 1997, noting that the vault area was still decked out with shag carpeting the height of luxury—when he arrived. He then began the process of renovating the space for conversion into a restaurant (and yes, the shag was one of the first things to go), and in 2000 The Piggy Bank was born. Other notable architectural features are the ornate neo-classical dropped tin ceiling, combination lighting/fan fixtures made of actual palm leaves, and the four large transom windows that line one brick wall. The barbeque theme is highlighted by tables draped with red, orange and



Pictured above is the bar at The Piggy Bank Restaurant in Beacon. The open door leads to the vault, a souvenir of the bank that used to occupy the building. Below is a closer view of the vault, which is now a wine cellar. (Photos by Kimberly Ryan)

Location:
448 Main St.,
Beacon

Phone: 845-838-0028

Hours:
Monday-Thursday 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Fridays 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.
Saturdays 12 p.m. to 10 p.m.
Sundays 12 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Entrée Price Range: \$7.75 to \$20.95

Reservations: Recommended for parties of 5 or more, and on Saturday evenings

Handicapped-accessible: Yes

Website: www.piggybankrestaurant.com

fyi The
Piggy Bank
Restaurant



Doug Berlin, Owner

white plaid tablecloths, which blend surprisingly well with the warm hues of burgundy, brown, gold, yellow and copper which dominate the décor, making the dining area warm and inviting. (Picture the best from Pier 1's fall collection.) Antique lovers will enjoy the restaurant's location in Beacon's East End Antique district, which is also just north of Cold Spring, another area known for its many antique shops. The restaurant, which seats 75 inside and 50 outside, also features an attentive and efficient wait staff, gift certificates and both on and off-site catering. For anyone with an appetite for mouth watering barbeque food, a trip to The Piggy Bank is a worthy investment of your time sure to make palate-pleasing sense.