

The Eat Beat
Tupelos World Café

By Jason Reagan
Mountain Times

A local couple is melding the best of their three previous restaurants to bring a taste of American diversity to downtown Boone.

Tupelos World Café will soon replace the recently closed Angelica's Vegetarian Restaurant, bringing the original owners full circle back to their King Street roots. Mike and Nova Nelson, the former owners of the first incarnations of Angelica's and Coyote Kitchen and the recent owners of Moonshine Café on Water Street are reopening Angelica's, which closed in December, and rechristening the location as Tupelos World Café.

While the King Street eatery will retain some vegetarian options, Tupelos' menu, which the Nelsons describe as a blend of "ethnic American" fare, will also branch out into the world of breakfast while reflecting the Nelsons' strong beliefs in offering some locally grown, hormone-free, organic options.

"That idea is what we are trying to take to the next level with [Tupelos]," Mike said. "Getting back to that is what is what's going to make us feel good about going back to that space," he said.

"As far as lunch and dinner, we've nailed that. But we are breakfast people ourselves. We thought how fun it would be to go into the world of breakfast," Mike said. After extensive renovation, the cafe is slated for a March 1 opening.

The breakfast menu will include some locally or regionally raised bacon and sausage provided by an Asheville distributor, homemade granola and an exploration in a variety of wheat and gluten-free breads for people with food allergies. Breakfast will also reflect an ethnically diverse theme and will include Mexican *juevos rancheros*, burritos and a Japanese omelet roll, as well as a vegan Thai red curry concoction.

"It will be a representation of the diversity in America," Nova said.

While breakfast and lunch will focus on quickness and a more limited menu, Mike, who will work as head chef, said dinner would include an elaborate array of gourmet options, including appetizers, soups, salads and breads coupled with an eclectic entrée selection. In order to give life to Tupelos, the Moonshine Café had to wane. The eatery, located in the former Jailhouse Restaurant, closed in late January.

However, many favorites from the Moonshine dinner menu — tamales, some Italian, and Cuban fare — will remain and Mike promises the entire menu from breakfast on will feature “Cuban like crazy.” In addition, the couple will delve into Thai curry, Japanese nori rolls and some Chinese stir-fry.

To reflect the radical changes to the café, the Nelsons hired local painter Fred Pell, who said he planned to turn the place into a “Van Gogh painting.”

In addition to serving a diversity of food, the Nelsons hope to serve the downtown community by offering the restaurant space for benefits and evening events.

The restaurant’s menu will also reflect the couple’s values. They will work with the New River organic growers cooperative and several local farmers. Sunday brunch will feature only locally grown eggs.

Tupelos will also feature organic wines and beers, fresh fruit juices, smoothies and coffee by Bald Guy Brew.

For Nova, returning the Angelica’s location is a homecoming. Nova’s mother worked downtown at a former jewelry store that now houses the Looking Glass Gallery and Nova grew up immersed in the King Street experience — movies at the Appalachian Theatre, snacks at Boone Drug. Nova vividly remembers celebrating her mother’s 30th birthday at a surprise party in the restaurant’s building when it was another vegetarian restaurant, Marvin’s Gardens.

“We’re really excited to be back in downtown and we’re ready to be a community center,” she said.

“This space is the heart of downtown,” Mike said. “Being in this location and serving the foods we’re choosing to serve, we feel like it will be an amazing experience to help celebrate the diversity of the community.”

Tupelos will open March 1 at 8 a.m. and serve breakfast until 3 p.m. while also picking up a lunch menu at 11. The restaurant will close at 3 to prepare for dinner and reopen at 5. The Nelsons have not decided on an exact closing time.

For updates, check out the Web site of the now closed Moonshine Café moonshinecafe.net, which will redirect to the Tupelos Web site currently under construction.