

Country Kitchen welcomes hungry Aggies

By JAY BLINDERMAN
Staff Writer

There are some places Aggies can go and always feel welcomed. The Country Kitchen on Highway 60 is one of those places.

The "Kitchen" is a short drive west of Northgate down University until you go over the bridge that crosses 2818.

From the bridge it's a couple of miles longer on a road that's under re-construction and then you'll see the yellow sign marking the spot.

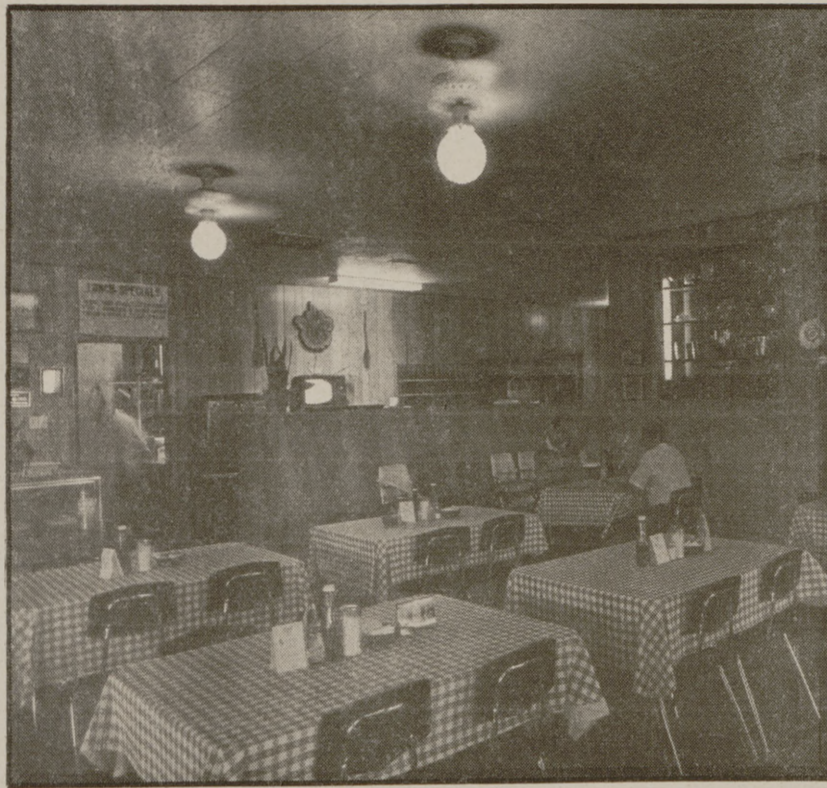
Country Kitchen is an appropriate name for the restaurant, mainly because the meals have a home-cooked country flavor. The atmosphere is similar to what could be expected if you were to be treated to a meal at a friend's home.

The menu at the Country Kitchen offers barbecue, fried chicken, chicken fried steak, Mexican food and burgers. Frog's legs are available for those who desire a *different* type of cuisine.

I've been on a chicken fried steak kick lately, and as a result, that's what I ordered for dinner. I also ordered the soup of the day, shrimp gumbo.

Much to my surprise, the soup and the entree arrived at the same time. I realize the "Kitchen" is not on the same level as the Texan Restaurant, but I expected the soup to arrive before the main event.

However, the soup ordeal was the



only problem I had with the Country Kitchen, the service at the diner was friendly and prompt.

My water and my ice tea cups, which were of the traditional plastic variety, were always filled before I had a chance to empty them. In addition to filling the cups, the waitress stopped by a time or two to make sure I didn't need anything extra.

Speaking of extras, the outside of

the building is nothing special, but the inside of the restaurant has a few interesting knick-knacks.

When you walk into the restaurant, there are two large wagon wheels that are a dividing point between incoming hungry customers and outgoing customers with full stomachs.

On the full-stomach side of the wagon wheels are the cash register

and a glass case with the home-made pies of the day displayed.

On Sunday the selection included pecan, lemon and coconut pies. Prior to my arrival, buttermilk pie was in the case but the piemaker couldn't keep up with the demand, the waitress told me.

The pie choice for me was pecan and my dinner date decided she would give the coconut a try. The coconut pie came topped with four inches of meringue and like the pecan pie, was a tasty conclusion to dinner.

Aside from the wagon wheels, there was a display case with glassware and antique irons on the shelves, that divided the large eating area into two separate rooms.

Behind the cash register on the full-stomach side of the room are another set of display shelves, with more knick-knacks, mostly assorted teapots and kettles.

But the most interesting decoration in the Country Kitchen is an antique jukebox that plays player piano music. The jukebox was acquired by the owners of the restaurant in 1964. An article in a March 8, 1964 issue of *The Eagle* was posted on the wall beside the antique music player.

My hungry Aggie rating for the Country Kitchen is a three and a half out of five. The prices range from \$4 to \$10 dollars if you include a dessert, which I highly recommend. The "Kitchen" is not that far from campus and it might make you feel like you had a good home-cooked meal. □

Somerville's Country Inn makes drive worth it

By TRICIA PARKER
Staff Writer

I'd heard about an old steak house in Somerville from some friends who went there before a formal. It was a great place, they said, with huge steaks and an atmosphere as bountiful as the food. So when it came time to find a restaurant to review, it seemed a logical choice. We dressed with care for the big evening and drove off down Highway 60 toward the Country Inn.

The drive itself supposed to take about 20 minutes so when 18 minutes later we pulled up next to a white-plank house, with a Coca-Cola marquis announcing "Country Inn," we were tempted to keep going for another two to see if the real Country Inn was further down the road. Fish Richard's it wasn't.

I'd always heard that you can tell how good (or how safe) a restaurant is by the number of cars outside. The parking lot was full, so braving the roadside puddles and muddy splashes from passing cars, we poked our way past pick-ups and into the gloomy interior of the Country Inn.

The inn had as much atmosphere as we'd been led to believe, just not the one we'd expected. The brown and yellow flowered, vinyl tablecloths were more functional than linen, but just as clean. A TV, not a fireplace lit up the gloom in one

corner and honky-tonk tunes played softly from a jukebox along one wall.

My friend knew he liked the place when they brought a beer in a frosty mug and put crackers to munch on the table. I wasn't so easily convinced. A friendly waitress pointed out the wall-mounted menu on a Coca-Cola board — all-you-can-eat chicken fried steak \$4.95; fried catfish, fries and hush puppies, \$5.75; small, medium and large sirloin steaks, prices on request. I began to like it better.

My friend, who knew what was coming, ordered an extra-small steak the restaurant serves as a special when available. I opted for the catfish as we sipped our beer, looked around and waited.

The room itself was small, and paneled in the cheap, thin plywood you win on "The Price is Right." The atmosphere was jeans and flannel for the obviously local people who settled back to visit and watch the game on TV. It was a friendly place where the people gave us only one you-silly-college-kids look when we came in overdressed.

After the crackers and the beer came a big dinner salad, nothing to brag about, but good. Nothing to prepare us for what came next, in other words. My huge deep-dish platter was piled three inches high with catfish, fries and hushpuppies, more than adequate for me and my companion, if he hadn't had worse problems of his own. The

"extra-small" steak weighed a pound and a half, minus bone, and flopped over the edges of the vast oval plate. Accompanied by hefty baked potatoes, the food on the table could have fed a hungry family of five with leftovers to spare.

Doggedly, we got down to the dirty business of reviewing the food. The catfish was lightly battered and nicely spiced, the french fries manly and the hushpuppies light as air. But the beef was the best, my friend told me between forkfuls, the best he'd ever eaten in fact. The entire grueling process took about an hour and a half, mostly because of the time required to get our second wind between assaults on the plate.

When we were ready to go, the bill was waiting for us on the bar — \$20.96 for the two of us and quite a deal if you're expecting a one and a half pound slab of beef. The management told us other steaks run from the small, weighing in at two to two and a half pounds for \$11.50 to the three-pound large for \$14.65. And yes, they said, people do eat it at one sitting.

The Country Inn is in Somerville, on the right side of Highway 36 if you're coming from College Station. It is open Monday-Saturday from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. On Sundays, it opens at 11 a.m. It's not a place for dieters or the faint-of-belly but it is an out-of-the-ordinary restaurant with food great in quality and quantity. I'd give it a perfect five for sheer brashness. □