

# California comfort food at JustEat bistro

By **SUSAN SPRAGUE YESKE**  
Staff Writer

It's a quick, seven-mile trip from Lambertville to Buckingham, Pa., but it was a leap into another world for Marc and Theresa BrownGold when they made the decision to open a food business there.

Marc BrownGold had spent five years as executive chef and manager at the Hamilton Grill Room where he honed his skills as a grill chef and manager. Deciding he was ready to go out on his own, he and his wife began scouting for locations. They chose upscale Buckingham Green, a strip center on Route 202, where they set up their first endeavor, JustFood by BrownGold. (The melded name follows a theme they created when they combined her surname, Brown, with his, Gold, when they married.)

That was eight years ago. Although they were happy with the upscale takeout and catering business, they still wanted a full-service eatery.

"My dream was always to have my own restaurant," said Marc BrownGold, one with thick, white cloth napkins and tall stemmed glassware for those who brought their own wine.

Two years ago, he and his wife opened the 52-seat JustEat by BrownGold, a California-style bistro with a wood-burning oven and a grill in the dining room.

This year, they sold JustFood so they could concentrate on the restaurant, where they also cater.

BrownGold calls his cuisine "bistro food, comfort food, real food, nothing frou-frou," choosing to let the ingredients speak for themselves rather than cover them with sauces and spices.

He may be understating his lineup. Although his menu is contained on a single page, it runs the gamut from Asian spring rolls to smoked duck to cassoulet to veggie burgers.

The cassoulet, \$25, a French comfort food that is time-consuming to prepare, is an ample portion of stewed duck, lamb sausage and pork. It has the deep, rich flavors that come only after lengthy cooking.

His grilled black grouper with homemade pimento and capers, \$25, is a thick, meaty piece of fresh fish cooked so that it flakes perfectly when broken apart with a fork.



Staff photo by Paul Savage

Marc and Theresa BrownGold have created their restaurant, JustEat, in Buckingham, Pa.

## JustEat by BrownGold

**ADDRESS:** Buckingham Green, 4950 Old York Road, Buckingham, Pa.

**PHONE:** (215) 794-1818

**HOURS:** 5:30-10 p.m. Mon.-Sat., 5-9:30 p.m. Sun.

**CREDIT CARDS:** Yes

**SMOKING:** No

**LIQUOR LICENSE:** No

**FOOD:** Very good to excellent

**SERVICE:** Friendly, helpful

**AMBIANCE:** California-style bistro

**COST:** Appetizers \$7-\$11.75; entrees \$17-\$32; bistro menu \$13-15

A roasted half-chicken, \$17, gets added flavor from herbs inserted under the skin, which has the smoky sweetness that comes from a wood-burning oven.

Grilled sirloin strip steak, \$28, is portioned for a big appetite. Cooked perfectly to the requested medium-well done, it comes covered in a light gravy that adheres to the chefs' admonition to never waste flavorful drippings.

All of the meat and fish entrees are attractively accompanied by side dishes of a delightful sweet and white potato mash, plus braised seasonal vegetables.

Theresa BrownGold is a vegetarian, so there is always at least one vegetarian choice on the menu. On a recent visit, it was roasted asparagus with mushroom fricassee over brown rice, \$17. Grill marks were visible on the thin spears of asparagus, which were seared to bring out the sweetness of the vegetable, but not overcooked. The mushrooms derived extra flavor from the fricassee and paired well with the rice.

A pear and parmesan salad with poppy seed dressing, \$7.50, led the appetizers as the favorite while a fettucine special, \$7, was coated too heavily with parsley and vinegar. Both were adorned with shards of high-quality parmesan.

For those who hadn't had too much Thanksgiving turkey, turkey apple with sage was the soup of the day, \$4.50; and for salad lovers, there was the house Just-Salad, \$7.25, a simple combination of mixed greens with a high-grade olive oil and balsamic vinegar.

Theresa BrownGold makes about half of the desserts, which vary daily. A cranberry cheesecake, \$6.50, was the favorite, light and fluffy with the tartness of the berries contrasting well with the creaminess of the cheesecake. Pecan chocolate pie, \$6.50, was rich and crunchy, while scoops of homemade pumpkin and vanilla ice cream, \$6.50, were a disappointment, more icy than creamy. A slice of layer cake, \$6.50, with a startling splash of lemon across the top and a thick, mousseli-like filling, was a delight.

JustEat has a short bistro menu Mondays through Thursdays, which was not tested but looks promising. It varies but always includes veggie and beef burgers.

BrownGold changes his menu each month. For the colder days of December, he added hearty fare of rabbit, venison with cherries, rack of lamb and duck smoked for 16 hours in a wood oven.

Reservations are not required, but are recommended for week-ends, when there might be a wait. Weekends have an unusual bonus: Marc BrownGold often wears his kilt while cooking. Just because it's comfortable.