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RAISING THE BAR

SIGRID MCCAWLEY

Fish, Chips & Sips

DEAR OLIVIA BAR & KITCHEN
BRINGS BIG CITY ENERGY TO
PARKLAND'S DINING SCENE

BY KARA BYRNES

Dear Olivia, the whimsically named new Parkland restaurant, is the latest addition to P Hospitality Management's growing portfolio. Recently opened in the former Deja Blue space in Parkland Commons, the concept is a passion project for South Florida-born restaurateur Paul Greenberg, who joined Christina and Eddie Pozzuoli's restaurant group last year.

Greenberg, co-founder of high-energy hotspot American Social, envisioned a modern neighborhood dining destination that would feel like a home away from home for young families, bar regulars, and serious diners alike. With a world-

class culinary and cocktail team, a warm atmosphere, and three decades of hospitality experience, he's delivered—offering a welcoming environment, a beautifully designed indoor/outdoor space, great food, inspired drinks; and the not-so-secret ingredient—a healthy dose of fun.

The beating heart of the restaurant, a large wraparound indoor/outdoor bar, was three deep on a recent visit, as patrons in everything from après-golf attire to stilettos sipped craft cocktails. Diners packed the twinkle-lit lakeside terrace on a sultry South Florida summer evening, unable to resist the lure of the setting. Indoors, the light and airy dining room buzzed with conversation—creating the intangible vibe that is the secret sauce of successful restaurants. Dear Olivia feels tailor-made for the Parkland dining scene.

Joyful, energetic, and a little bit cheeky, Dear Olivia

channels the personality of its namesake, Greenberg's nine-year-old daughter. She's often onsite with her father, checking in on tables and proudly telling patrons that it's her restaurant and "she's there to make sure they have a great time".

"Parkland hasn't had a restaurant like Dear Olivia," Greenberg says. "I wanted to bring the community the same type of culinary and bar experience that you find on Atlantic Avenue or Las Olas—great food, creative drinks, and exceptional hospitality—without the expensive Uber ride and babysitter costs."

The menu is globally inspired but approachable—even playful—taking diners through a range of options. Starters and Shareables include melt-in-your-mouth biscuits with honey butter and pimento cheese, and Cast Iron Baked Brie served with fig jam, toasted walnuts, and grilled ciabatta bread. Main plates might feature





a perfectly grilled Char Siu Pork Chop served atop a crispy rice cake with sesame spinach and Asian barbecue sauce, or branzino with fresh, seasonal accompaniments.

The Adult Happy Meal, a riff on the viral “Girl Dinner” trend, is already a bona fide favorite. Comprised of a Caesar salad, French fries, and a perfectly poured dirty martini, the concept feels more like something you’d find on a menu in Miami or New York than Parkland—and it’s already one of Dear Olivia’s top sellers.

“We were surprised to see how popular the Adult Happy Meal is,” Greenberg muses. “It’s playful, not something you see at every restaurant—and that’s exactly why we wanted to bring it to ours.”

Other early favorites include the double smash burger, seared to crispy perfection and topped with caramelized onions, pickles, and house-made AP sauce (mayonnaise, ketchup, hot sauce, and maple syrup); jumbo coconut shrimp with Thai green papaya salad and mango sweet chili sauce; and indulgent Reuben egg rolls stuffed with pastrami, Swiss cheese, Thousand Island dressing, and roasted heirloom carrots. Desserts are impossible to resist,



from Mile High Key Lime Meringue Pie with graham cracker crust, mango sauce, and toasted coconut, to my personal favorite—Cookies: fresh-baked chocolate chunk cookies served with a chilled milk bottle.

The children’s menu, kid-tested and approved by Olivia herself, goes beyond chicken tenders (though Greenberg insists theirs are “next level”). Steak tips, grilled shrimp, fish, burgers, and a popular favorite—ramen—cater to budding young foodies.

With a bar that commands attention the moment you enter, beverage director Jose Gil—who worked with Greenberg at American Social—spent months perfecting a cocktail program designed to resonate with the community while reflecting current trends. Gil has created a master class in cocktail making. Vintage cocktails such as Manhattans and Negronis share the menu with inventive signatures like the Strawberry Smash—a refreshing blend of Maker’s Mark bourbon, ginger syrup, strawberries, lemon juice, and Q ginger beer—and Just Friends, made with El Tesoro Blanco tequila, blueberry purée, lemon juice, Pom Wonderful, sage spice, and topped with bubbly Salt Pom air foam that adds a fresh dimension.

Greenberg strongly believes that passion and personal commitment are crucial to a restaurant’s success. He is onsite every day, delivering dishes to tables, chatting with guests—sometimes with Olivia and his other two children, Cameron (11) and Luke (5).

“I still get excited about openings and like to spend a lot of time in the restaurant to make sure I share my excitement with our guests,” he says. “The culture you create from the start helps generate the type of camaraderie that’s so important to a successful restaurant. When your butts get kicked and you sit down with your team at the end of the night and look at each other and say, ‘We survived’—that’s a great feeling. The understanding of being part of something, night after night, making people happy and taking care of them.”

Dear Olivia is located at 7805 North University Drive in Parkland. Menus and reservations available at dearoliviaparkland.com.

