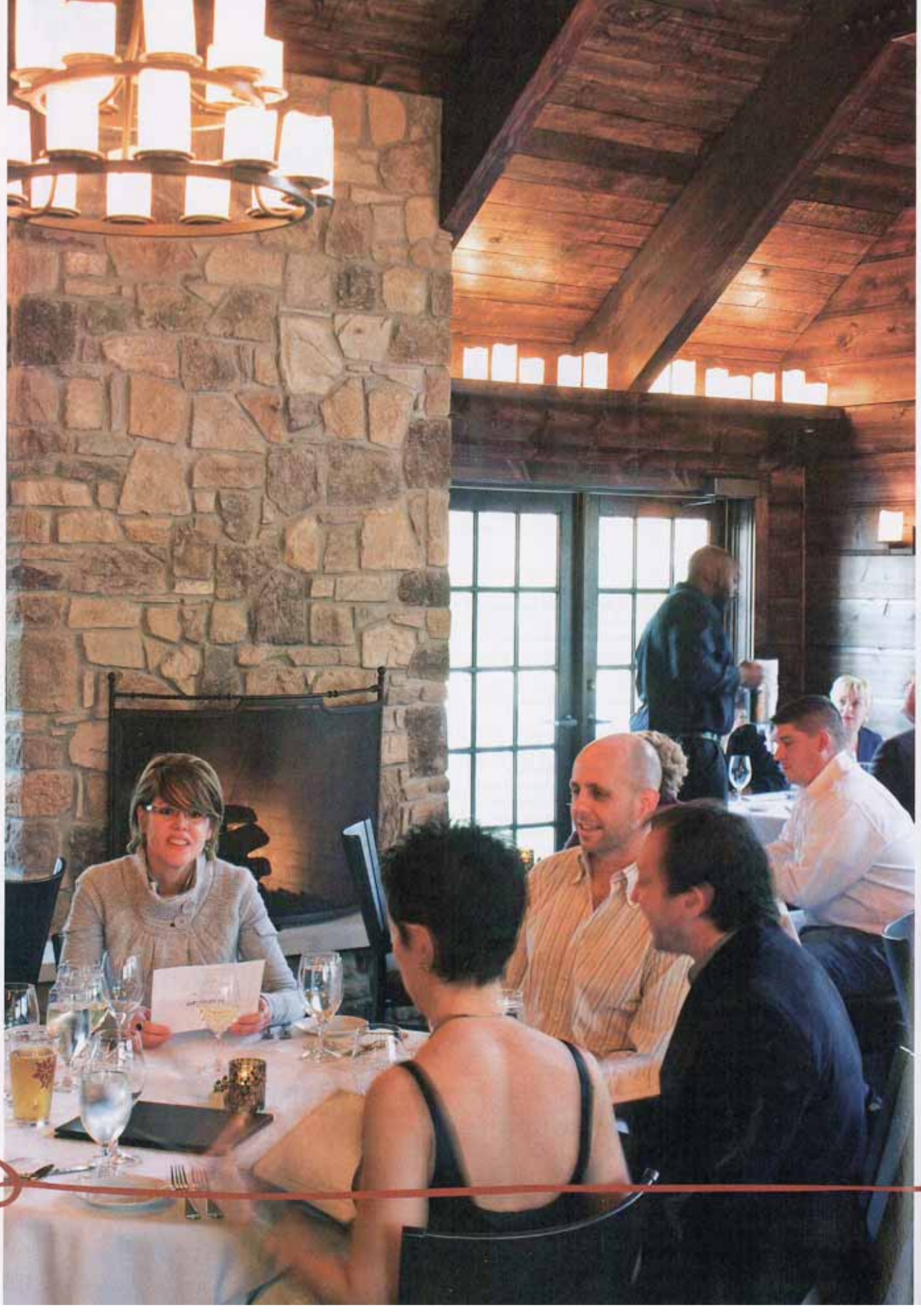
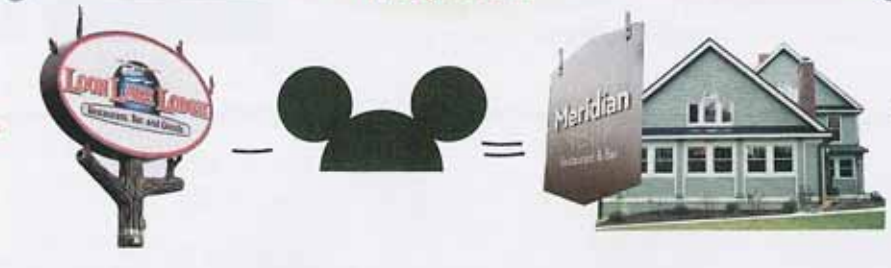


MERIDIAN RESTAURANT AND BAR

new

5694 N. Meridian Street, 466-1111, meridianonmeridian.com

Chef Dan Dunville, a veteran of Dunaway's Palazzo Ossigeno and Ruth's Chris Steak House, opened this Meridian-Kessler eatdrinkery last fall after an extensive renovation of the former Dodd's Townhouse. Having converted the space from a grandmotherly landmark to a sleek, sconce-lit lodge, Dunville crafted a menu full of updated classics like pork tenderloin rubbed in chile with chorizo and sweet-potato hash, and even an airy housemade gnocchi with greens. He calls the hybrid Hoosier haute cuisine, and diners seem to get it. You can see it in the way they dig into the crunchy fried oysters Rockefeller, how their eyes roll back when they catch that first waft of smoky corn soup, and how their faces light up when the server presents the "doughnuts and coffee" dessert as a little paper bag of sugary yeast balls and a mini mug of coffee creme anglaise sauce for dipping. Farmhands never had it this good, and they certainly didn't have Meridian's swift, professional staff to offer thoughtful suggestions and keep things running smoothly. BEST SEATS IN THE HOUSE: Table 224, a cozy four-top tucked back in the bar. BEST-KEPT SECRET: Sunday brunch brings decadently stuffed French toast, house-smoked salmon, and a more laidback pace. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF: The free valet parking.

EATQUATION