

Eatery has comfy mom-and-pop aura

MASON, N.H. — Delicious is the smell of warm maple syrup mingling with the aromas of coffee and wood embers.

And it's that olfactory trilogy that welcomes diners to Parker's Maple Barn, a homey breakfast and lunch spot tucked deep in the woods of southern New Hampshire.

Opened in 1970 by the Parker family and operated for the past 22 years by Ronald and Sandra Roberts, Parker's exudes the sort of mom-and-pop aura that leaves regulars comfortable enough to show up in pajamas.

Housed inside a massive post-and-beam barn, the dining room is furnished with rough-hewn wooden tables clustered around pellet and wood stoves that give the whole place a cheerful, toasty vibe.

Much of the menu is tied to the rich maple syrup produced on-site each spring. Beyond topping luscious pancakes and waffles, the syrup also goes into the coffee they roast, the frappés they blend and the caramelized onions that top the Swiss burger.

The stuffed French toast — two enormous slices of egg-dipped

bread sandwiching cream cheese whipped billowy soft and studded with blueberries — alone makes Parker's worth a visit.

The menu has plenty of hearty lunch food, too, including maple baked beans, pulled pork sandwiches and all the usual sides, including outstanding home fries that are crackling crisp outside and tender inside.

In spring, visitors can see the maple syrup being made and a gift shop pleasantly heavy on kitsch and candy offers jugs of the syrup all year.

Parker's Maple Barn doesn't take reservations, so an early arrival or willingness to wait is key on weekends, when throngs of locals and tourists show up (especially during fall foliage).

But for a taste of hearty New England cooking in a great atmosphere, the wait is a bargain.

(Parker's Maple Barn, 1316 Brookline Road, Mason, N.H., 603-878-2308, www.parkersmaplebarn.com, credit cards accepted, ATM available on-site)

— By AP Food Writer
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