Serving dinner and a movie

By Aaron Gouveia   January 03, 2008 6:00 AM
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FALMOUTH — Caroline and Sean Wetherell, ages 6 and 5, respectively, gave it two thumbs up.

And the early reviews from their mom, Catherine, are that sipping a cocktail while watching a movie sounds great, although she avoided the temptation at yesterday's early afternoon matinee of "National Treasure 2."

Customers interested in dinner and a movie can now find both in the same place at Falmouth Cinema Pub — three cinemas furnished with tables, swivel-back chairs and a waitstaff ready to serve pub-style food and spirits.

"It was really fun," said Catherine Wetherell, when asked for a quick review by a stranger she passed in the Falmouth Mall parking lot. "The pizza was great. It was thin crust."

Falmouth Cinema Pub opened its doors Friday and the early reviews have been good, said co-owner Lisa Ballarino yesterday.

"You'll pay for your ticket, sit down and then you'll have a waitress for the rest of the night," co-owner Christopher Ballarino said in an interview before the cinema pub opened. "You can eat, drink and you won't have to get up for the rest of the movie."

Although this is an untested idea on the Cape, Ballarino has run the Route One Cinema Pub in North Attleboro for nine years. He also owns and operates Ma Glockner's restaurant in Bellingham, the town where he lives with his family.

At the Falmouth location, there eventually will be three cinemas, each showing a different first-run movie, which will seat a total of about 400 people. Tables will be available 30 minutes before the start of the movie on a first-come, first-serve basis. When the movie's over, patrons have to leave before the next showing.

The building used to house the Falmouth Mall Cinemas, but Ballarino spent nearly $1 million on renovations to create a different ambience. The theater went from six theaters to three, and Ballarino installed a Dolby digital surround sound and new projectors.

Movie tickets will sell for $5.50 for matinees and $7.50 for regular admission.

While the movie plays on the screen, viewers, seated in swivel chairs, can order curly fries, buffalo chicken, egg rolls, grilled pizzas, and 10-ounce Black Angus burgers.

Prices start at $3.99 for a crock of soup. A burger will set you back $7.99. The most expensive food item on the menu is the lobster salad roll for $10.99.

And there is beer and wine available to wash it all down.

Beer is offered in a 16-ounce glass or 60-ounce pitcher. There are 13 different kinds of wine, ranging from a $4.50 white zinfandel to the Gabbiano Chianti Classico for $7.50 a glass.

Alicia McGrath took a peek inside yesterday and thought it looked like it was more for families than a couple on a date. "I love the idea. It's different, but I'm not sure I want to smell the food all the time," she said.

With a theater full of people eating, drinking and placing orders with waitresses, Ballarino said some people are concerned about noise during the movie. But plastic utensils minimize the noise and people are generally considerate.

"In nine years, I've only asked one or two people to leave," Ballarino said. "And I've really never had a problem with someone complaining about noise."

His goal is to eventually have all his staff TIPS (Training for Intervention Procedures) certified, an alcohol control program for bartenders and waitstaff.

The idea of a movie with dinner resonates with residents such as Pam Richardson of Falmouth, who knows about cinema pubs from frequenting a similar establishment in Haverhill. The mother of two kids under the age of 6, Richardson said she's looking forward to hanging out with friends or taking her family.

Also, a local theater showing first-run movies will save her a trip to either Sandwich, Mashpee or Hyannis.

"It's more of a casual atmosphere and it's a great idea to have dinner and a movie at the same time," Richardson said. "For people on the Cape, it's a huge deal to not drive that far so this will save a lot of time and it'll be very convenient."