

## Dining review Mount Airy’s Bolder restaurant is worth the drive



Bolder restaurant serves American food with a twist in Mount Airy.

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For Howard Magazine

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Bolder restaurant gives diners a reason to get off the beaten path.

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If you’re in search of a good meal, it’s worth a drive to Howard County’s western border. Bolder, a new restaurant in Mount Airy, is a pleasant surprise.

The restaurant’s modest exterior along rural Frederick Road (Route 144) doesn’t do justice to the stylish decor and delicious and seasonal New American dishes you’ll find inside. Before it opened in mid-October, the space — previously occupied by Springs Landing Fine Country Pub and Drovers Grill & Wine Co. — was gutted and remodeled by owner and county resident Paul Saiz. The result is a comfortable dining room with an infinity fireplace, rustic stonework, a glass wine rack and faux marble tables.

A separate bar, riffing similar details, opens to a cozy patio, which will be a draw in warmer weather. The restaurant can accommodate 92 guests.

Cocktails are referred to as “elixirs” at Bolder and include creative house concoctions like a whiskey lemonade mule and a Mason jar crush. Familiar wines by the glass and bottle are available, along with drafts and bottles of beer.

General manager Ellie Ennis oversees the dining room and the kitchen. She is responsible for the menus and recipes. There is no designated chef.

Ennis brings years of expertise as a longtime manager at the former Coho Grill (now The Turn House) at Hobbit’s Glen Golf Course in Columbia. Coho patrons will recognize some dishes now served at Bolder, like the crabby fried green tomatoes.

### Dining review



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We kicked off our meal with that excellent appetizer. The crispy rounds of green tomatoes were topped with a softball-size mound of lump crab blanketed with a sultry roasted red pepper coulis.

Our other starter, the shrimp Bolder, was good, too, though it is a very rich dish. Toasted garlic crostini were enhanced with plump shrimp encased in a garlicky Parmesan cream sauce dusted with snowy grated cheese.

Bolder’s menu offers about a dozen entrees, including a changing dish of the month, plus specials of the evening. But the list is also balanced with several burgers, sandwiches and salads, letting you decide what kind of meal you want to have.

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Our friendly server was helpful in describing the dishes.

We were pleased with the tender London broil, sliced into wide strips and draped with a flavorful mushroom demi-glace. The comfort-food meal was served with homey mashed potatoes and crispy Brussels sprouts.

We also enjoyed a turkey Brie sandwich. It was thick with roasted turkey breast, melted cheese, thin slices of Red Delicious apples, spinach leaves, tomatoes and a swipe of honey mustard. While commendable, the ensemble, stuffed between slices of multigrain toast, would have benefited from more Brie.

Strawberry nachos are a house specialty and offered as a table dessert to be shared. Since the fruit isn’t in season, we decided to try another recommendation: a chocolate-chip walnut pie staged next to vanilla ice cream.

We were happy with our decision. The warm, cookie-like pie was a delectable wintertime treat.

We also liked the warm apple cobbler with vanilla ice cream.

Spiced chunks of the fruit were presented in a ramekin with a flaky pastry crust that sported a ball of ice cream.

Bolder was named to present a “positive image” in the neighborhood and to be bold in its endeavors, Ennis said.

“We’re small but strong,” she added.

There may be better-known names and closer destinations for most county residents, but Bolder makes a case for earnest, well-prepared food in a friendly setting that really isn’t that far away.

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### At a glance

**Bolder**  
17004 Frederick Road, Mount Airy  
410-489-2491  
[bolder144.com](http://bolder144.com)

**The vibe:** Bolder had a laid-back ambience with mellow '80s music playing on the sound system on our visit.

**You'll fit in wearing:** Casual clothes, including jeans.

**Don't miss:** The crabby fried green tomatoes.

**Best for kids:** There is a kids' menu with choices like burgers and pizza with a housemade crust. Vegetable and milk options add a healthy twist. A popular dish is the dinosaur chicken tenders, made with all white meat, manager Ellie Ennis said.

**Reservations:** Accepts reservations.

**Price range:** Appetizers, \$5 to \$18; burgers and sandwiches, \$9-\$16.50; entrees, \$14 to \$26.