

LET'S *Eat* OUT!

Enjoy rich tasting beverages and goodies at cozy coffee shop

By Helen Wale Turner

Charlotte's Coffees and Teas serves up a wide choice of coffees and teas as the name promises, but also offers much more. The cozy shop has free Wi-Fi, several large tables plus a comfy sofa and chair for lounging, and soft jazz music in the background. There are also tables outside to be enjoyed on pleasant days.

Husband and wife owners Aaron and Jennifer Wattler, previously from Mandeville, eventually chose Denham Springs as the site for their business after the coffee shop where Aaron had been working in Mandeville was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. They appropriated Jennifer's mother's name for the shop they opened in March 2009 because the name "Charlotte" had the feel they wanted. Aaron runs the shop and is the friendly face you'll see there every day.

"This isn't just a coffee shop," Aaron said. "It's a gathering place, also, almost a cultural club, where people can meet and interact in a very relaxed setting. People are open and relaxed; it's almost like a bar setting, but without alcohol."

Located at 2648 S. Range Ave. in Denham Springs near the intersection of Bass Pro Blvd., the shop's atmosphere is conducive for writing, web surfing and meeting friends, and the large tables, with electric outlets for laptop computers, are perfect for study groups.

"It took us a little while to get the business going, but we have a lot of regulars now, and people come in as much for the company as they do for the coffee and tea," said Aaron.

Speaking of the coffees and teas, customers appreciate their variety of hot drinks, especially at this time of year, including such favorites as café au lait, cappuccino, latte and espresso.

Teas are also in demand - some classic, such as The Charlotte (black tea with lemon and sugar), and some more exotic like The Chai (a blend of black tea, spices, vanilla and milk). Other tea fla-



Aaron Wattler, owner of Charlotte's Coffees and Teas, enjoys an iced caramel espresso and pastries.

vors include passion fruit, blue eyes (hibiscus), caramel, apricot and peach.

While the hot drinks are always popular, some of the best sellers at Charlotte's are the frozen drinks, all of which are also available fat free. Some of their cold beverages are frozen or iced latte, iced chai, iced coffee and iced mocha, with a favorite being Americano espresso with caramel over ice.

Their parfait is made to order with layers of fresh fruit such as strawberries and bananas. Don't

overlook the smoothies; try the strawberry, banana, guava or papaya. Then there is the unique Drover smoothie, made with baby spinach, apple juice, orange juice, yogurt and Red Bull. Aaron says this concoction tastes like a green apple jolly rancher, and he offers customers a free sample to try it.

And what goes better with all those drinks than yummy treats? Charlotte's Coffees and Teas serves up a selection of cakes, cookies, bagels, scones and brownies. Not to be missed is the Charlotte's cheesecake and the lemonberry mascarpone cake.

Like muffins with your coffee or tea? Chose a banana nut, glorious morning, chocolate chip or cranberry walnut- big six-ounce muffins baked on the premises. Then there is their fudge; be sure to treat yourself to a piece next time you drop in.

Their homemade croissants are available as butter flavor, or try turkey with pepperjack cheese, ham with Swiss cheese, bacon and egg and cheddar, or spinach with artichoke. Their specialty wraps include buffalo chicken, Greek, Caesar or Southern turkey. They also have chips and dipped pretzels.

"Our croissants, fudge and cheesecakes are all made from scratch," Aaron said. "All food items are as fresh as possible, with most things either made or baked here. The cheesecake took me four or five months of experimenting to it get just the way I wanted it, and I went through trial and error for the croissants also."

He added, "All our products are very reasonably priced. We want our customers to feel rich without paying rich prices."

Charlotte's Coffees and Teas is open 7 days a week: Mondays-Thursday 6 a.m.- 9:30 p.m.; Fridays 6 a.m.-10 p.m. and Saturdays 8 a.m.-10 a.m.; and Sundays 9:30 a.m.-8:30 p.m. Call ahead at 225-667-7932 to place an order.

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