

# The Recorder

IN THE COMMUNITY, ABOUT THE COMMUNITY, SINCE 1877.

## The best movie theater ever!

BY MARGO OXENDINE • STAFF WRITER



**The “endless” bowl of fresh popcorn with real butter, and a Caesar salad with seared salmon proved a tasty repast at the Cinebistro in Richmond recently. The “dinner and a movie” theater also features waiters, comfy upholstered chairs, and flatware rolled in linen napkins. (Recorder photo by Margo Oxendine)**

RICHMOND – A story about Cinebistro could be designated “Dining Delights,” or “See a Show.” That’s the double-feature attraction of this movie theater at Stony Point Fashion Park.

Those of us who live in the Highlands must travel at least 20 miles to Covington, or 40-some miles to Staunton, to see a first-run movie. It’s an all-too-rare treat that’s guaranteed to take up most of a day or an evening.

Those who occasionally manage to find a movie they want to see in Covington sit in creaky, worn seats that tend to list to port or starboard. There aren’t any cup holders, so that \$6 soda must be carefully placed on the floor, where it is inevitably knocked over sometime during the show. If you get popcorn, the bag or bucket must be juggled around the purse in your lap, because heaven forbid you should place your purse on that sticky floor.

A few flimsy napkins must be kept handy to wipe the butter-flavored whatever off your fingers.

The situation in Staunton isn’t much better, although most theaters have upgraded to cup holders. The last time I placed my “small” soda in such a holder, it immediately slipped through the too-large hole and cascaded across the floor.

What fun!

During the holidays, I discovered an astonishing place that you simply must treat yourself to the next time you get to Richmond: Cinebistro.

It’s in Stony Point, an upscale shopping wonderland just off the Chippenham Parkway. Cinebistro provides the pinnacle “dinner and a movie” experience.

First of all, tickets are no more costly than they are in Covington or Staunton. I’m not certain of the number of movie screens, but there are more than a few. Children are not welcome, which can be a big plus, with apologies to all squirmy, noisy tykes out there. In fact, one must be 21 to enjoy the many delights of Cinebistro.

You don’t have to ponder too long to realize what prompted this welcome innovation: An astute business person, trying to enjoy a movie. The screen blares with over-loud dancing hot dogs and popcorn buckets. In front of him, a group of teens, texting and talking on cell phones, clowning and roughhousing. Behind him, a fussy baby and a whiny toddler, who spills a soda, which gushes onto his Gucci loafers.

[editorial]



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Voila! A new business idea is born and it is called Cinebistro.

After picking up tickets at the "conciierge desk," one strolls through a gleaming glass and wood bar, with well-dressed patrons and servers. A friendly usher checks your ticket, and shows you to your seat.

Your seat, you discover, is an upholstered, swiveling lounger. There is a small wooden table attached, which holds real flatware, wrapped in a linen napkin. There is more leg room than your 6-foot, 5-inch companion requires.

A waiter appears immediately, and takes your beverage order. You must decide: A glass of sauvignon blanc? A glass – yes, a real glass – of Diet Coke? A sparkling water?

The waiter hands you a menu. "Previews" include lump crabmeat with three cheeses and cheddar rolls; fig and brie flatbread; popcorn chicken, shrimp or calamari; garlic chili wings, a triple-decker quesadilla, or crab and shrimp mac and cheese, with a toasted brioche crust.

If you want dinner with our movie, entrees include sweet tea chicken, penne fra diavolo, shrimp and grits, steak and hash, or fettuccine tossed with spinach, roasted garlic cream sauce, prosciutto cracklings, with a parmesan crust.

Gracious!

Salads include Caesar, Cobb, and sesame seared tuna.

And then, there are the sandwiches: a bistro burger, chicken BLT, veggie burger, pressed pork or ribeye cheesesteak.

In the mood for dessert? Try deconstructed peanut butter pie with roasted banana cream, Cineful chocolate cake or a crème brulee trio – vanilla, raspberry and rum-cherry chocolate.

Just want popcorn? It's fresh-popped, tossed with real butter, and comes in a very large bowl. If you happen to finish it, your next bowl is on the house.

Patrons at Cinebistro are not required to order any beverage or sumptuous food, but you do need to arrive in your seat 30 minutes prior to showtime. Once the movie begins, seat-service is discontinued; however, you are welcome to order at the concessions/bar area at any time... should you even want to leave your comfy seat.

While you're munching on tasty tidbits and waiting for the movie to begin, the state-of-the-art screen shows marvelous videos, accompanied by music but no jarring babble, of undersea life, Alpine skiing, or ballooning over the French countryside.

I saw "Lincoln" at Cinebistro. The film was moving, but the memorable theater experience superseded even Steven Spielberg's excellent effort.

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