

New menu items for spring

By **NICOLE BOWMAN**
Insider food writer

Casa Nueva, 4 W. State St., Athens, evolves every season with a menu highlighting seasonal, local produce with new dishes created by its hard working staff.

"We try to bring three items to focus," said Bob O'Neil, production coordinator. "We use them in a lot of our entrees."

This season, Casa invites customers to take a closer look at asparagus, rhubarb and Havarti cheese.

Asparagus is featured in several menu items including the spring burrito, spring breakfast omelet and breakfast wrap. The breakfast items feature a three-egg omelet with asparagus, oyster mushrooms and Havarti cheese. While asparagus is currently out of season, O'Neil said Casa will begin production of its pickled asparagus once the supply picks up.

The sweet vegetable known as rhubarb is enjoying its season in the spotlight in Casa's latest seasonal salsa creation — rhubarb-chipotle. The flavor is sweet but has a nice bite that customers have come to expect from a Casa Nueva salsa. Rhubarb is also featured in Casa's homemade rhubarb pie and a rhubarb-strawberry lassi drink.

Havarti cheese, which O'Neil describes as a buttery-textured cheese, is featured in Casa's many spring-themed entrees and appetizers, such as the spring quesadilla, spring burrito, and spring open face sandwich. It is a great melting cheese that provides a smooth texture and mild flavor that compliments every dish it touches at Casa.

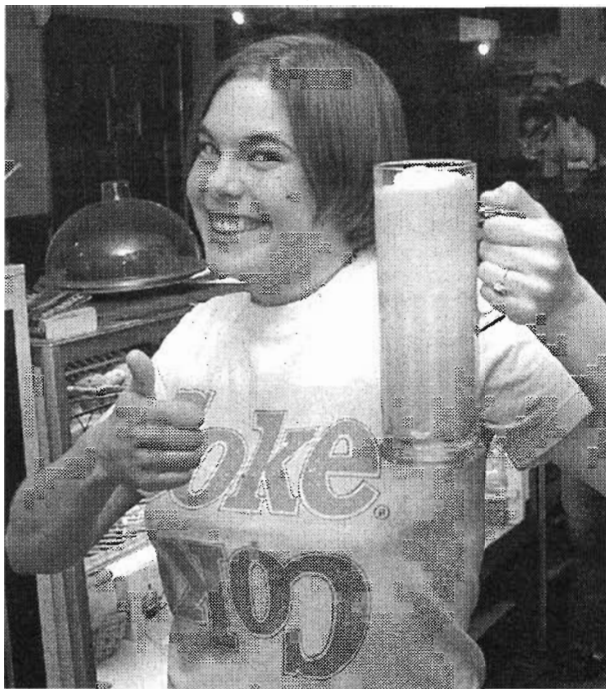
For dessert, O'Neil also suggests the double ginger ice cream and sea-

sonal fruit shortcake. The ginger ice cream features ginger in the ice cream and crystallized ginger, which is sweet while also providing the bite of ginger. The shortcake currently features reduced strawberries cooked with balsamic vinegar served on a homemade sweet biscuit.

Casa will have nightly specials ranging from \$8.75 to \$15. Monday is companion plants night; Tuesday, sandwich night; Wednesday, vegetarian night; Thursday, soybean night; Friday, seafood night; Saturday, Chef's Choice, and Sunday, Farmer's Market.

"We're really working with our chefs to create unique specials," O'Neil said. "When we come up with new things, it is exciting to our customers and for us."

Donkey Coffee and Espresso, 17 1/2 Washington St., Athens, is offering a new way to cool down on a spring day. The Donkey Blast is a fruit tea blend containing ginseng, ginkgo and guarana. The \$3 smoothie-like drink is available in strawber-



— Photo By John Halley

Donkey Coffee and Espresso employee **Darna Roederer** displays her approval of the store's latest drink, the **Donkey Blast**, a fruit tea drink.

ry flavor and passion, orange and guava flavor. Served in Donkey's tall glasses, the Donkey Blast is best enjoyed with an extra long straw while sitting at the coffeehouse's outdoor seating.

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Tomatillo's, 20 W. Stimson Ave., Athens, has gotten a new look for the spring. The Mexican restaurant has been painted a muted orange with a brightly colored door.

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If you are a Southeastern Ohio epicurean or a restaurant who wants to tell customers about the latest from your kitchen, contact food writer Nicole Bowman at food@theathensinsider.com, or call 592-6612, ext. 280.