

A Taste of **MARYLAND HEIGHTS**

Westport's Newest Restaurant Hits One Out of the Park

Cardinals star Albert Pujols created a winning team when he signed on with the Hanon family, formerly of Patrick's at Westport, to establish a new eatery bearing the famous first baseman's name.

Pujols 5, located in Patrick's old space at Westport, opened to much fanfare in late August, so resident reviewer Andrea Snowden and I decided to stop in for lunch to see what all the fuss was about.

As soon as we walked in the door, we were struck by the amazing transformation of the restaurant's interior space. The décor is sleek and modern, elegantly incorporating plenty of sports memorabilia without looking tacky or trite. The number five—which Cardinals fans will recognize as Albert's uniform number—is repeated throughout the space, carved out of stainless steel chair backs and watermarked on the walls.

Rumor has it the restaurant gets quite busy during peak times, so reservations aren't a bad idea, but we arrived just after 1 p.m. and had no trouble getting seated.

From the hostess who seated us to the waitress who served our meal, the service was excellent. Andrea was impressed that, unlike the staff at other restaurants she's been to, no one blanched when they saw us walk in with a stroller occupied by Andrea's 9-month-old son; they simply made sure the three of us could enjoy our lunch comfortably.

The menu is huge and well-executed, so chances are you'll start planning a return trip before you finish your entrée. In a nod to Pujols' heritage, there are several Latin-flavored dishes on the menu, including Arroz con Pollo (smoked chicken with black beans and rice) and the appetizer we tried, Chicken Flautas. The "rolled crispy tacos stuffed with chicken" were accompanied by pico de gallo and guacamole providing a pleasant kick to the palate.


We also tried one of my favorite dishes, risotto, which is an Italian rice dish. Their version combines herb-roasted chicken, tomatoes, spinach, mushrooms and Parmesan cheese for the ultimate in creamy comfort food.

Their entrée-sized Chop House Chicken Salad was also quite good, topped with the same herb-roasted chicken breast, tomato, avocado, red and green onion, bleu cheese and chopped egg. My only recommendation to the chef is to replace the iceberg lettuce (not even fast-food restaurants use it in salads anymore!) with something a little darker and more substantial—perhaps spring mix or at the very least romaine.

For heartier appetites, Pujols 5 also offers an impressive lineup of ribs, seafood and steaks, including pecan-encrusted orange roughy and center-cut beef tenderloin.

And of course, the restaurant caters to the die-hard sports fan as well: 30-plus plasma screen TVs blend subtly into the décor, and there's plenty of standard game-watching fare (buffalo wings, chicken tenders, nachos) on the menu.

Regardless of how the Cardinals finish their season, Pujols 5 is clearly a home run.

by Sara Berry 

Pujols 5

Address: 342 Westport Plaza, Maryland Heights, MO, 63146

Phone: (314) 439-0505

Website: www.pujols5grill.com

Hours: 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily

Prices: Soups, salads and starters: \$3 - \$9; burgers, sandwiches and stone-fired pizzas: \$7 - \$10; pasta and ribs: \$10 - \$20; steaks and seafood: \$15 - \$28.

Dress: Casual

	Yes	No
Reservations		
Smoking Allowed		
Outdoor Dining		
Carry Out Available		
Credit Cards Accepted		
Kids Menu		
Alcohol Served		



Pujols 5 features a tasteful dining room and several private meeting rooms as well as a bar area ideal for meeting friends to watch the big game.