

Restaurant
Review

by Debra Barnes

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CEDAR & MAIN

— TAVERN —

CONTOOCCOOK, NEW HAMPSHIRE

16 Cedar Street, Contoocook, NH
cedarandmainnh.com
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Cedar & Main Tavern: Riverside Pub Food Done Right



Blue Cheese Bacon Jam Burger
with crispy fries



Tavern Style Mac Bowl - short rib,
maple BBQ sauce and crispy shallots



Spinach Strawberry and Goat Cheese
with balsamic dressing

Brian and Libby Cressy have given Contoocook Village something it was missing: a true-neighborhood pub, set right on the banks of the Contoocook River at 16 Cedar Street. The building, restored from the ground up, blends old New England character with a relaxed, easygoing energy — exposed wood, barrel accents, and low amber lighting set the tone the moment you walk in. It feels like the kind of place where regulars have “their” stool at the bar by week two.

That pub spirit carries through everything here. There’s nothing fussy about it — just good food, ice cold beer, and a room built for lingering. Twelve drafts including Contoocook Cider rotate behind the bar, and the crowd ranges from young families grabbing an early dinner to neighbors and friends catching up over a pint.

The kitchen leans hard into crowd-pleasing comfort food, and it shows. The crafted burgers are the clear standout — thick, juicy patties built with unexpected combinations like maple barbecue, pulled short rib, and crispy shallots, or classic cheddar-and-bacon builds for purists. Every burger comes paired with hot, crispy fries, the kind with a real crunch and a soft center, perfect for dragging through the house sauce. Appetizers swing from familiar to adventurous: loaded fries piled with cheese curds and gravy, wings in a long list of sauces from honey garlic to hot honey, and a few global twists like crispy pork belly bao buns that keep the menu from feeling predictable. Heartier plates — chicken parmesan, hand-cut sandwiches, a rotating bowl of beef stew — round things out for guests who want something more substantial. I anticipate a few additional creative salads will be welcome summer specials accessing local farm fresh vegetables for those looking for a light meal.

The real draw, though, is breathtaking outside views. A wide balcony and ample deck seating sit right along the water, putting diners within view of the river’s bends and the old covered bridge downstream. It’s an easy spot to settle in with cold beer, signature cocktail and a plate of apps. When temperatures drop, deck heaters keep the outdoor seats comfortable well into the cooler months. On Sundays from 3-6 p.m., live music fills the deck, turning dinner into more of an evening out than a quick bite. Tuesdays are saved for “open mic night” from 6-8 p.m. Be sure to call ahead and reserve a seat!

For larger gatherings, Cedar & Main offers a private event room that holds up to 40 guests — a convenient option for birthday parties, rehearsal dinners, or wedding and receptions looking for a scenic, low-key setting. Recently one of the staff members got married right on the deck overlooking the river! A stunning setting for a beautiful occasion.

Service throughout has been friendly and unhurried, matching the overall vibe: nobody’s trying to rush you out the door here. Given how busy the tavern gets, especially on weekend evenings, calling ahead for a reservation is a smart move if you want to guarantee a table — particularly one with a river view. If you forgot to make a reservation, you can still call while you are on your way and your name will be put on the list.

Cedar & Main Tavern delivers exactly what a village like Contoocook needed: a genuine, unpretentious gathering spot where the food is hearty, the beer is cold, and the river view does half the work of making the night feel special.

