

500 Word Lunch

by Andrew Coppolino April 22 - 28, 2010

The Other Brother's
Lunch Wednesday to Friday; Dinner Tuesday to Saturday
www.otherbrothers.ca



Amuse bouche: Love of good food is a touchstone here, with a seasonal menu that makes sure the ingredients in a dish come together simply and with balance. A good wine list, comfortable relaxed setting, some funky drinks, and a patio ready for summer.

There are several Guelph restaurants that I am drawn back to. Yarmouth Street's The Other Brother's is one of them. Owners Karim Ladhani and Sara Watson know food and wine, and over their decade or more with the restaurant have established it as a return destination for me.

Their two-course or three-course lunch menu, extremely reasonably priced, is one reason, but mainly it's the quality and preparation of the food.

The atmosphere includes a fireplace with tile accents and an interweaving of good-bones old house and more eclectic bistro décor. I love the wall of large windows with tables with a view of the patio.

Among apps, calamari with basil mayo and tomato sauce could have been a bit more crisp, but had perfectly cooked squid texture and consistency, with all the dish's components integrated well.

Some time ago in a restaurant where I worked, I cooked an appetizer of mushrooms in cream sauce on toasted bread. Staff here will tell you their version is just one of those dishes that they can't take off the menu. And you know what? The baguette is toasted nicely, and the mushrooms are an earthy, woodsy basic shiitake, cremini, and oyster blend with a deliciously composed Stilton cream. It tasted great more than a decade ago—and it tastes great now.

Chicken comes vol-au-vent (in puff pastry and with its usual cream-based sauce), beef is braised with mashed potato, and lamb shank is served on mashed yam with star anise and cumin jus.

Duck confit was among the best I've had. Crispy exterior gives way to moist, tender meat inside. Herbed mashed potatoes add creamy goodness and an acidic red currant sauce is a brilliant colour and flavour addition. Sautéed vegetables are simple, crisp, and lovely. A fried lotus root chip is an attractive garnish.

Done right, poached salmon can highlight the flavour profile of the fish well. Moist and with beautiful colour, the salmon is a striking picture sitting on creamy white risotto with a hint of lemon. The palette of colours and refreshing tastes make it a perfect spring dish.

The menu will be changing soon as we move into spring, so many of these items are likely to go into retirement. The point is the good execution by the kitchen as they send out these dishes.

The final courses I tried were puff pastry Napoleon with subtly sweet Chantilly cream and lemon. The pastry was flaky without being dry and was garnished with a zig-zag tuile cookie. The entire dish held together well and had that refreshing quality I like in a dessert.

Ditto white chocolate and raspberry crème brûlée: combined, those highly flavoured elements were in good balance with silken and refreshing custard. Best of all, someone in the kitchen didn't let the Roburn micro-torch get the better of him while caramelizing the sugar topping. The crust on a proper brûlée is light and easily broken, not a thick affair like a pane of stained glass.

That said, I'll be back.