

Cork opens to world of flavours

By Melody Wren, For NightLife

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Going to the delightful village of Elora for a meal is always an adventure since the restaurants are continually changing. On a recent visit, The Cork restaurant was a joy to discover.

Everything is made in-house, and it shows from beginning to end in creative combinations.

Drinks arrived promptly, as did a basket of scrumptious homemade crusty sourdough bread which we devoured dipped into a mixture of Greek olive oil and an eight-year-old balsamic vinegar.



Cork-restaurant. Cork restaurant, Cork — Eat and Drink, 146 Metcalfe Street, Elora; 519-846-8880; www.eloracork.com

From an extensive list of appetizers, I chose pan-seared saganaki cheese, a Greek cheese perfectly crisp on the exterior, and delectably chewy inside. Served with tangy lemon marmalade, rich basil pesto and flatbreads, it was a flavour blast worth repeating. My dining companion had mussels in a lightly herbed white wine cream sauce perfectly cooked.

A tangy tarragon citrus vinaigrette was a perfect complement to the endive radicchio mixed salad I ordered. There was perhaps too much dressing which wilted the organic greens, however it was saved by the mixed flavours of fresh orange segments, candied pecans and dried cranberries. My companion had a light and refreshing salad of delicately grilled beets, plain and pickled, served with goat cheese and pea shoots. The richness of the cheese complemented the beets.

My main course of fresh Lake Erie pickerel was served with gently roasted fingerling potatoes and local asparagus. Lightly grilled, the fish was tender but I couldn't use the accompanying citrus butter as it was solidly frozen. My dining partner had lamb shanks, tenderly braised with Moroccan spices but it was quite dry. The accompanying caramelized sweet potato wedges were melt-in-your mouth tasty.

Desserts were imaginative and difficult to choose. Gorgeously presented pana cotta, a densely firm yogurt based white chocolate terrine topped with caramelized pineapple, blackberries and blueberries was the best I have tasted. Granita choices change weekly, and if it wasn't the final flourish to the meal, it would be a perfect palate cleanser with tiny refreshing chunks of ice, mixed with a hint of mint in a juice deeply banana flavoured with a sharp overlay of blackcurrant and orange.

Chef Saleem Carr makes a point of visiting each table at busy times, a rarely seen treat that each customer seemed to enjoy. He grew up in Manchester learning the ropes in the restaurant his father owned. At nineteen, he owned the restaurant, left at the age of 21 and toured through Asia, from Turkey to Thailand, Pakistan and India, cooking in kitchens along the way. His obvious passion, adventure and unique way of

mixing international flavours using fresh local foods, combined with cooking every morsel in-house makes for a winning combination.

Open just over a year, the decor could use some minor tweaks to get it to a more elegant level, but none of the hiccups detract from the from the fabulous gastronomic experience.

Forks: 3 ½

Cork — Eat and Drink

146 Metcalfe Street,

Elora

519-846-8880

www.eloracork.com

Hours: Sunday to Wednesday, 11:30 am to 9:00 pm; Thursday to Sunday, 11:30 am-10 pm

Cuisine: International with hits of Moroccan, and Asian using local meats, greens and vegetables

Reservations: recommended

Attire Casual

Atmosphere: Friendly and casual.

The menu: Local, seasonal main dishes offered seven choices (ranging from \$18 to \$28) including rabbit, lamb, beef, chicken, fish, pasta. The menu states that customers need to be patient as everything is made fresh.

Beer and Wine:

The wine menu changes regularly as does the food menu, depending on what is in season. The local theme carries through to the beers, with microbrews such as Stonehammer, Creemore, F and M.

Service: The servers were amiable, efficient, and knowledgeable.

The Bill: Dinner for two with one drink and tip came to \$147.65

In a nutshell: One-of-a-kind menu with a focus on local food. Costly, but not over- priced for the presentation, service, full-on flavor and high quality.

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