

# Epicurean Episodes

## Brasserie de la Mer Classic Country French Cuisine At The Vineyard Creek Hotel & Spa

**T**HE DINING DETECTIVES HEADED NORTH FROM PETALUMA ON AN EASY RIDE ALONG HIGHWAY 101 TO DOWNTOWN SANTA ROSA'S RAILROAD SQUARE. We had heard through the grapevine that there was a new French restaurant, Brasserie de la Mer, with Executive Chef Liz Ozanich preparing tasty cuisine using local and organic ingredients primarily from the Pacific Coast. The restaurant is located adjacent to the new Vineyard Creek Hotel, Spa & Conference Center. The Brasserie style menu was designed by Philippe Boulot who is a James Beard Award Winner.

The dining room was designed with high ceilings and an exhibition kitchen. There was dining on two levels with the upper level opening to a lovely outdoor patio. The flow of the dining room was very comfortable with sufficient room between tables. Our server, Deble, was soon at our table and told us about the specials. We ordered a bottle of White Oak Chardonnay and were about to see what Brasserie de la Mer had to offer. De la Mer means "of the sea" but the menu featured a variety of dishes that we had to try.

Here are some of those that we highly recommend:

### APPETIZERS

**Sonoma Foie Gras pan-seared medium-rare with Rhubarb Relish, Brioche Crostini and Balsamic Syrup**  
We must admit that if Foie Gras is on the menu we have to have it. Much is said about how the Hudson Valley Foie Gras, with its ability to be prepared rare, is superior but this Sonoma Foie Gras was prepared perfectly-medium rare which is more to our liking and was sweet and delicious!

**Dungeness Crab, Mango and Avocado Salad with Blood Orange Vinaigrette, Micro Greens & Chive Oil**  
This salad is fabulous with lovely presentation and fantastic taste.

### SOUPS

**Yellow Split Pea Soup with Sonoma Smoked Duck Breast**  
Pea soup is a great test of how all soups at a restaurant will be. We found this to have a great consistency and delicious especially because of the duck.



Our server, Deble, advised us about the cuisine, wine and helped to pace our meal perfectly.

### ENTREES

**Oven Braised C.X Leg of Sonoma Lamb**  
Slow cooked for seven hours and served with Yukon Gold potato gnocchi and Cipollini onions, baby carrots and baby summer squashes. The lamb melted in your mouth, fell off the bone and was as hearty as an autumn dish could be. We also loved the crisp vegetables that were a perfect accompaniment.

**Liberty Farms Duck—Grilled Breast & Confit of Hindquarter with Fricassee of Haricot Vert, Russian Banana Fingerling Potatoes with Sable & Orange Demi-Glace**  
Bravo!! This was the best tasting and most tender duckling we had eaten all year. It was just crispy enough for our taste.

**Monterey Swordfish—Grilled with Braised Serrano Ham Wrapped Bologian Endive, Grilled Market Asparagus and Green peppercorn Sauce**  
This fish was what makes "de la Mer" outstanding as it was fresh, prepared with a great peppercorn sauce and arrived at the table piping hot.



### DESSERTS

Pastry Chef Michael Barkley has created desserts worth saving room for. Try the Chocolate Mousse which includes a fabulous Cacao Bean Nougatine, Zinfandel marinated Black Mission Figs and Zinfandel reduction. This was the best Mousse we've had in years. We recommend eating the Nougatine with your fingers and dipping it in the Mousse! Also try the Strawberry Soup which is served with vanilla whipped cream and citrus granite. This was as unique presentation and was also a fabulous treat.

### WINE LIST

The Wine list is well balanced with both local Napa and Sonoma offerings and many French wines as well. We opted for a bottle of White Oak, Sonoma County Sauvignon Blanc 2001 and found it to be an excellent choice which paired well with all our menu choices.

We really enjoyed our dining experience at Brasserie de la Mer especially because of the excellent cuisine and our knowledgeable, friendly and professional server Deble. She advised us about the cuisine, wine and helped to pace our meal perfectly. Santa Rosa is in the center of the Wine Country and already has some excellent fine dining. Brasserie de la Mer with its classic country French influences is a welcome addition to the North Bay's dining scene. We had a great time and look forward to dining there again soon.

The Chocolate Mousse above includes a fabulous Cacao Bean Nougatine, Zinfandel Marinated Black Mission Figs and Zinfandel reduction. This was the best mousse we've

## THE DINING DETECTIVES

BY CAROL & JOE DAVIS  
www.finediningdetectives.com



Sonoma Foie Gras pan-seared medium-rare with Rhubarb Relish, Brioche Crostini and Balsamic Syrup.



Dungeness Crab, Mango and Avocado Salad with Blood Orange Vinaigrette, Micro Greens & Chive Oil.



Oven Braised C. K. Leg of Sonoma Lamb—The lamb melted in your mouth, fell off the bone and was as hearty as an autumn dish could be.

BRASSERIE DE LA MER VINEYARD CREEK HOTEL & SPA  
170 Railroad Street, Santa Rosa, CA 95401  
Phone: 707-636-7388 • Fax: 707-636-7380  
www.vineyardcreek.com

### OPEN 7 DAYS

BREAKFAST: 6:30 a.m.-11 a.m. LUNCH: 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m.  
DINNER: 5-10 p.m. BAR OPEN: 11 a.m.-11 p.m.

Reservations Recommended • Major Credit Cards Accepted  
Ample Free Parking • Banquet Facilities