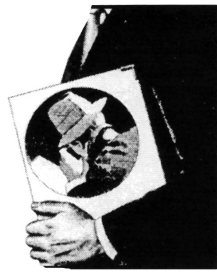


*Carol & Joe Davis***FINE DINING  
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**EPICUREAN EPISODES****El Dorado Kitchen:  
Superb Sonoma Cuisine***The Communal Table made from an 1810 Vermont Bridge.**Salmon Terrine**Executive Chef Ryan Fancher**Pan Seared Alaskan Halibut*

**T**he picturesque town of Sonoma continues to evolve. A perfect example is the newly refurbished El Dorado Hotel and The El Dorado Kitchen, formerly Piatti.

The restaurant has clean modern lines and a large open dining room. There is also the option of dining on the outdoor patio by the pool. We felt comfortable right away. We saw a birthday being celebrated at the huge Communal Table, made from an 1810 Vermont Bridge.

New Executive Chef, Ryan Fancher, formally with The French Laundry in Yountville, is proud of what he has accomplished in the two months El Dorado Kitchen has been open. His version of "Wine Country Cuisine" has a Mediterranean and French Bistro flair, drawing on his experience in classic French cooking working with renowned chefs Thomas Keller and Richard Reddington.

Carol, our personable server, introduced the specials of the day and offered cocktails. We put Dermott the bartender to work on a few of his specialty drinks. We loved the Peach Jalapeno: sliced jalapeno peppers, Absolut Peach Vodka, fresh squeezed lime juice and white cranberry juice. The Strawberry Rhubarb Rita was also a winner, made with house-made rhubarb confit, pressed strawberries, fresh squeezed lime juice, Cazadores Reposado Tequila and Grand Marnier.

Our first appetizer was Oysters on Ice. They were perfectly chilled and accompanied with Shallot and Black Pepper Mignonette. We also had to try the California Green Asparagus Soup. It is served chilled with lemon crème fraiche -- perfect for this warm summer evening. The most unique and deli-

cious starter, though, was the Salmon Terrine. It was poached Norwegian salmon, marinated overnight and served with extra virgin olive oil and crostini. The texture was much more interesting than standard Salmon Mousse. Another excellent choice is Roasted Mushrooms with Hen of the Woods, King Trumpet mushrooms, and duxelle cream. This savory vegetarian creation is pungent, rich and delicate.

A pasta course was next, and we were pleased to share the Goat Cheese Ravioli with asparagus spears and shitake mushrooms. It was light and tasty and provided a nice transition to our entrées.

The Entrée selection offers something for everyone. Based on our experience, and the smiles on the faces of the diners around us, you can't go wrong with any choice. Our overall favorite was the Pan Seared Alaskan Halibut. It was served with fingerling potatoes, fennel, calamari, nicoise olives and roasted peppers. The fish was moist and perfectly prepared. It was a very healthy meal that was also tasty. Our server, Carol, recommended the Breast of Chicken served with russet potato gnocchi, spring favas, and pearl onions. We all agreed it was absolutely unique and very tasty. The Liberty Valley Duck Breast was delicate and savory as well, featuring Sonoma County grown fowl. It came with delicious caramelized sunchokes, poached apricots and glazed cipolini onions.

We appreciated that the wine list offered nearly 20 choices by the glass, since our preferences are split between red and white wines. Mostly local boutique wineries are listed and the price make everything approachable. Wine Director Anani Lawson, also formerly with The French

Laundry, emphasizes California varietals. We didn't realize it at first, but we all ordered Sonoma Wines. "When in Sonoma, Drink Sonoma". Our choices included Gloria Ferrer Blanc de Noirs; Sonoma Champagne Kunde Sauvignon Blanc; Magnolia Lane, Sonoma; Mayo Family Chardonnay, Sonoma 2004; Valley of The Moon Zinfandel Sonoma 2002; and BR Cohn Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma 2001. It wasn't hard to make good pairings given this wine list.

The Desserts were definitely superior. Pastry Chef Janet Rikala Dalton was formerly at Town Hall and Postrio. Our overall favorite was the Brown Butter Crepes: bananas foster and cinnamon ice cream. Not far behind was the Buttermilk Vanilla Bean Panna Cotta in a strawberry rhubarb soup. The Apricot Sorbet with fresh apricots is a perfect lighter selection and it tasted sensational. Another favorite was the Lemon Cheesecake with graham cracker crust -- light with rich lemon flavor.

The addition of the El Dorado Kitchen to Sonoma Square brings dining to a higher level with intense flavors and high quality ingredients. The service is superb - relaxed yet professional. The staffing level is higher than normal, so we felt very well taken care of. For a little slice of paradise, you must experience the El Dorado Kitchen.

**Post Notes:**

El Dorado Kitchen  
405 First Street West  
Sonoma, Ca. 95476  
707-996-3030  
eldoradosonoma.com  
Open 7 Days  
Lunch 11:30 AM - 2:30 PM  
Dinner 5:30 PM -- 10 PM  
Major Credit Cards Accepted  
Banquet- Private Rooms Available  
Outdoor Patio Dining  
Full Bar and Bar Menu