

Epicurean Episodes

The Girl & the Gaucho

Latin Food with Jazz and Salsa

THE DINING DETECTIVES WERE OUT ONCE AGAIN ENJOYING A RIDE THROUGH THE WINE COUNTRY. We were headed for Glen Ellen and our destination The Girl & the Gaucho Restaurant. We made a quick stop at Cline Cellars which is just past Sears Point Raceway for some wine tasting. We particularly enjoy Cline's Zinfandel and Oakley Vin Blanc. We passed a number of other wineries, as well as antique and furniture stores along the way. The hills were still quite green from all the rain and snow that we had this winter and the sun was shining and the sky was clear. It was a perfect late afternoon in the Napa Valley.

We continued north and enjoyed the peaceful, winding road, Arnold Drive which took us into the small hamlet of Glen Ellen. On the left side of the street was our destination, The Girl & the Gaucho Restaurant.

We were all smiles when we entered the restaurant because of the festive decorations and light Latin/Spanish Jazz music in the background. Vibrant warm colors, hanging glass lanterns, eclectic art from around the world and a small rendition of a Gaucho made the dining room so charming and inviting.

There was an open kitchen and counter seating for 6 as well as tables for about 60. We were seated in the center of the room and to our delight and surprise Allison our waitress came to our table with a gift. It is their tradition to offer each of their quests a glass of Spanish Amontillado Sherry accompanied by a small dish of fried spiced almonds, which pleased our

palates and got us started off in an enjoyable manner. As we ordered a large bottle of San Pellegrino mineral water and proceeded to study the menu, warm bread was placed on our table. We were set for a great dining experience and here is some of the cuisine that we highly recommend.

SMALL PLATES

Roasted Chicken Empanada with Salsa Verde

This spicy dish is a fantastic starter and a great way to your first taste of the Latin Cuisine.

Mahi Mahi Cerviche

This cerviche of the day—every day they have different renditions—was light, fresh & flavorful.

SALAD

Hearts of Palm, Jicama, & Avocado with Pumpkin Seed Vinaigrette

An excellent salad, fresh, zesty and we loved the jicama.

PAELLA

Paella with Saffron, Peppers, Onions, Clams, Mussels, Rock Shrimp, Braised Rabbit, Roasted Chicken, and Chorizo

As a paella fan this was a must. One rarely sees paella on a menu and this was great, not too spicy yet flavorful.

LARGE PLATES

The Large Plates have a twist which allows you to "have it your way." You can order beef, fish, pork or chicken and have it prepared in the tradition of Spain Cuba, Chile, Argentina or Brazil.

On this evening we chose these entrees which we really enjoyed.

Grilled Swordfish, Cuban Style

The swordfish was perfectly prepared with roasted root vegetables, papaya & kiwi salsa, and had an avocado lime salad on the side. The unique tastes made this a special dish.

Pan Roasted Half Chicken, Brazilian Style

This was a very generous meal. Half a chicken prepared with skewered pineapple and peppers, black beans and sweet potato fries. It was very succulent and again the unique preparation and flavors made it terrific.

DESSERTS

Trio of Custards with Caramelized Bananas

You must save room for this. The caramelized bananas were some of the best we had ever tried and the custards were light and creamy. Just wonderful!

Roasted Apple Empanada with pomegranate syrup and pumpkin ice cream.

Another great reason to save room for dessert.

WINES

The Wine list has varietals from California, Spain, Chile, and Argentina. They offer flights of wine by country which is an interesting twist. Usually you see flights by grape style. We particularly enjoyed the 1999 Santa Rita Sauvignon Blanc from Chile which was perfectly balanced and had a lovely bouquet.

THE DINING DETECTIVES

BY CAROL & JOE DAVIS

www.finediningdetectives.com



Dessert trio of custards, caramelized bananas and friends!



The Girl & the Gaucho has a lot to offer. Sondra Bernstein, the restaurateur has created a festive, warm eclectic environment as well as a great concept of having the cuisine prepared to one's taste to reflect each Latin country. Executive Chef John Toulze executes the concept

bringing out unique flavors, confirming that a lot of thought has gone into creating special cuisine. We had a wonderful time at The Girl & the Gaucho and look forward to trying other Latin tastes on our next visit.



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Dinner Only • 7 Days a Week—5:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m.
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