

EPICUREAN EPISODES

Carol & Joe Davis
Fine Dining Detectives

www.finediningdetectives.com



Mary's Apple Creek Cafe

Photos courtesy Joe Davis.



GOURMET CUISINE IN A COUNTRY SETTING...

It was a lovely warm and sunny winter afternoon when we headed north on Stony Point Road toward Sebastopol to our destination for dinner this Saturday evening, **Mary's Apple Creek Cafe**. We had learned that a prominent local chef, Andrew Lujan, had joined Mary from one of the most highly rated restaurants in Petaluma. So, we knew we were in for a fine dining experience.

The air smelled crisp and fresh in the Russian River Vineyard Area. The drive was beautiful as the bare orchards were surrounded by lush green hills. We started out early because we wanted to shop around in Sebastopol before we headed west on Bodega Highway. There are many unique shops in Sebastopol that are not found anywhere else in the bay area.

We found a lovely piece of local art at Artisana that will be the perfect birthday gift for a close friend. We also found some fabulous bath products at Sumbody, a shop which creates and sells some of the best bath and body products we've ever tried.

Then just as we were approaching Mary's Apple Creek Café, we looked down the road on Bodega Highway and decided to stop in at Rose & Thorn. We met the owner, Carol Coler-Dark, who has created a wonderful eclectic Garden & Gift Shop. We found two stylish ceramic cat dishes which have added to Kirby and Sabrina's, dining experience. Kirby and Sabrina are our two wonderful cats! All in all, we found some unique finds in the Sebastopol area, so be sure to allow enough time to get the full experience. Now it was time for dinner, so we crossed the street to Mary's.

As we entered Mary's Apple Creek Café we were warmly



Mahi in puff pastry.



Tangerine creme brulee awaits.

greeted by Nina, Mary's daughter, and Andrew Lujan the Chef. Mary's has three dining areas which include the original restaurant in front with a counter area and about 10 tables, the outdoor patio which is very popular during the warmer months and the new dining room in the back which has a cozy wood burning stove. Nina our waitress escorted us to the new room where we were seated at a comfortable table and took our order for drinks. Some fabulous Village Bakery seeded Sourdough Bread was soon on our table to get us started. **Mary Rushworth**, the owner, welcomed us and told us how thrilled she was to have Andrew as her Chef. We were about to see what up-scale cuisine in this country setting was all about. Here are some of the dishes that we tasted and highly recommend!

APPETIZERS

Steamed Mussels in a white wine, garlic, lemon & cream broth with parsley. The mussels were cooked to perfection and the broth was delicious. A superior starter.

Creamy Polenta with Portobello Mushrooms with roasted garlic, brie and a merlot reduction sauce

This is a very flavorful appetizer which was absolutely fabulous and a terrific starter to share. In fact, we liked it so much that we can also recommend it as an entrée!

HOMEMADE SOUPS

French Onion Soup

A very hearty soup which is perfect for hungry eaters made with Gruyere Cheese and Village Bakery croutons. It was delicious.

Roasted Garlic & Baked Mushroom Soup with potato puree

This was a unique and delicious soup and with the use of potato puree gave it a full bodied consistency without having to use cream.

SALADS

Baby Spinach Salad

With port wine vinaigrette, pine nuts, goat cheese and red onion- Fresh as can be, we loved the crunchy pine nuts

Classic Cesar Salad

The lettuce was fresh and the homemade dressing was worthy of Cesar himself. We asked for anchovies and were pleased to be able to add them to complete this delicious salad

ENTREES

Grilled Filet Mignon

Zinfandel Demi-Glace,

mashed potatoes, seasonal vegetables. This was a superior cut of meat prepared medium rare as ordered. It melted in our mouths. The demi-glace gave it a delicious light crust. The fresh local vegetables were lightly cooked to perfection. We also really enjoyed the mashed potatoes which had small bits of carrot for an excellent flavor. You can't have a better entree even at twice the price.

Curried Chicken Breast

Sautéed with banana peach sauce and topped with toasted almonds, seasonal vegetables and mashed potatoes. This was a very fresh tasting entrée. The light curry flavor was a great addition to the perfectly prepared moist and flavorful local chicken.

Mahi in Puff Pastry

Mahi Mahi with Jumbo Prawns wrapped in a puff pastry and baked. Lobster Bisque Sauce was served on the side as was Rice Pilaf. Terrific Puff Pastry is hard to find yet this was done to perfection. The fish stayed moist and the Lobster Bisque topping made this dish truly worth having.

DESSERTS

All the desserts are made fresh daily at Mary's.

Mary's Apple Creek Apple Pie

Surely this fantastic dessert made from local apples is "Mary's Famous". Sweet... yet tart with a lovely latticed crust made this Apple Pie one we'll remember for a long time. We can't wait to have it again!



Mary's "World Famous" Apple Pie lives up to its name.



Photos courtesy Joe Davis.

Nina & Mary Rushworth greet customers with hospitality & warmth.

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MARY'S APPLE CREEK CAFE ————— continued from pg. 13

Tangerine Crème Brulee

A better tangy dessert is hard to find.

Chocolate Mousse with Whipped Cream & Pirouette Cookies

We were totally full by now but the light Mousse was worth the calories.

We had Cappuccinos and Espressos to compliment the excellent desserts. Ware's Port is available.

WINES

The wine list is small with reasonably priced wines that will suit most everyone's taste.

The cuisine is so good that the list needs to have some better choices. Until that happens wine aficionados might consider bringing their own higher end wines for better enjoyment as corkage is reasonable. We were happy with our choices which included a DeNatale, Russian River Proprietor's Reserve Sonoma Pinot Noir. This light red wine paired well with the Curried Chicken. We weren't sure which of the Chardonnays we'd prefer so we opted to try a flight of the three that were on the wine list. We found the Murphy Goode to be more buttery but eventually liked the Ledson which was drier to drink with our meal. The Kenwood 2001 would have been just fine as well.

MARY'S APPLE CAFÉ has come of age after almost 5 years of changes and growth. Mary's vision and perseverance, Andrew's polished cuisine and the friendly staff makes this an excellent choice for Fine Dining in Sonoma County in a relaxed atmosphere. They already have a loyal following but don't be surprised if once the word is out that they are booked. So we recommend that you call ahead for reservations especially for dinner. We look forward to the springtime when we can enjoy the outdoor patio but will probably be back sooner!

Chef Andrew Lujan fixes mouthwatering fare.



MARY'S APPLE CREEK CAFE'
9890 Bodega Highway
Sebastopol, Ca. 95472
707-829-3065

www.marysapplecreek.com

Open Wednesday to Sunday

LUNCH

11:00 AM – 2:00 PM

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5:00 PM – 9:00 PM

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JCRITICAL Italian Lunch & Dinner Served at Semolina

By Jerry Schwartz

CAFE SEMOLINA JUST OPENED IN PETALUMA at 600 E. Washington Street, so I decided to give it a try and also attempt writing my first restaurant review. My wife and I made reservations for 6 PM so when we arrived the place was still quite empty.

We were greeted by the new owners, Joe Peirano and Jose Perez, both formerly of Cafe Giostra. Joe was also from Marin Joe's in Corte Madera for 25 years. The ambiance was light, bright and clean. Dried wheat and oats decorated the tables.

Inexpensive plates, silverware and glassware was the choice of the new owners. Their reasoning was that the food on the plates would be "the show." And what a show we were in for as Joe brought a plate of Calamari Fritti with garlic aoli and a traditional red cocktail sauce. Wow!

Crunchy on the outside yet tender, delicate and moist inside. The dipping sauces were no big deal but the flavor was so good we didn't need them.

We decided to split a Caesar Salad. Needless to say, it was also perfect. The dressing did not have too much garlic; it had plenty of anchovy yet not enough to dominate. It was just delightful. We began wondering about our main course.

I ordered the Veal Piccata which was tender and bursting with much flavor. It was so good I found myself sipping the leftover lemon wine sauce and capers with French bread that honestly I didn't need. Now I had no room for coffee or dessert.

My wife had a Shellfish Pasta dish with delicate Bay scallops and some prawns and salad shrimp thrown in served with a creamy Alfredo

sauce with bits of onion. She was wild about her plate. The noodles were perfectly done and the seafood was not overly cooked.

The service staff is very caring and coordinated the timing well. We did not want for a thing we did not get. The music was pleasant and the place was quiet enough so we could enjoy a conversation without effort. There is plenty of parking available which is rare in Petaluma these days.

SEMOLINA offers great food at fair prices which should make it a popular place for years to come. Hours are from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday through Friday and 4 p.m. to 11 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. Reservations are recommended but not required and take-out food is available. For information call (707) 766-6975.

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