

EPICUREAN EPISODES

Stella's Café Sophisticated Cuisine in a Country Setting

There's something about Sebastopol that we really like! Some enjoy the country setting and the relaxed atmosphere but for us

The atmosphere at Stella's is romantic, intimate, and charming which is why it is highly recommended by locals and the Bed & Breakfasts in the area.

prepared with local produce in a Mediterranean, Pacific Rim or California Cuisine Style. There were Vegetarian and Vegan Dishes available too. To please his loyal clien-



it's the friendly residents and the superior cuisine. Executive Chef and Proprietor, Gregory Hallihand, knew where his culinary talents would be appreciated, when he opened Stella's Café in 1999 in Sebastopol. He has acquired quite a loyal following of those with a sophisticated palate, as was evident in this busy restaurant on the Sunday night that we dined. For those who haven't been there yet, it's not hard to find since it is adjacent to Mom's Apple Pie, a Highway 116 landmark going west from downtown Sebastopol.

As we entered on this cold night, we could feel the warmth from the wood burning fireplace near the door. We were escorted to our table past the open exhibition kitchen by Michelle who does a little bit of everything at Stella's and was our knowledgeable server as well. Light Jazz wafted in the background as we settled into the comfortable chairs with anticipation. We'd heard that Gregory was one of the most talented Chefs in West County and we were looking forward to our meals featuring fresh homemade dishes

tele there is a new menu twice a month reflecting the freshest local ingredients. Here are some of the dishes that we enjoyed and can highly recommend.

For starters we must mention the fresh and aromatic Five Seeded Bread that is from the local Village Bakery in Sebastopol. It was too good, we ate it immediately but correctly declined more so as not to ruin our appetite.

We really enjoyed the Salads which included a Mixed Baby Organic Greens with gorgonzola, Port plumped

Carol & Joe Davis

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Michelle O'Kane of Stella's Cafe

cranberries and toasted hazelnuts and a Red Roasted Beets Salad with Cave Aged Blue cheese, walnuts, tangerines and arugula. Both were fresh and lightly dressed allowing the flavors to come through. We've started to make more salads at home now featuring nuts and fruit, as it is a refreshing alternative to lettuce and tomatoes. The Appetizers that we really liked were the Dungeness Crab Cakes with red aioli and the Asparagus Gratin with lemon, parsley,

olive oil, and sourdough bread crumbs. The crab cakes were only lightly breaded and almost all crab and very fresh tasting. The Asparagus was al dente and came as a lovely presentation in teepee arrangement.

The Entrées included our top choice which was the Grilled Filet Mignon with roasted red potatoes, Pinot Jus and fresh vegetables. It was prepared charbroiled medium rare as we ordered and was just fabulous! The

Chocolate Dessert



Executive Chef / Owner, Gregory Hallihand (right) and assistants



Pinot Jus was delicious and truly added to the taste of the Filet. Another Entrée that we can highly recommend is the Scottish Salmon with Salsa Cruda, Angel Hair Pasta and vegetables. This fresh salmon is actually flown in from Scotland and was delicious. You can really taste the difference between fresh up stream free swimming salmon and farmed salmon and it's greatly appreciated. We also

the Filet Mignon. For those who like to bring their own wine there is No Corkage fee if you make reservations (Holidays and Special Events are excluded).

Stella's Café has a great feeling about it; perhaps you would call it good vibes or a positive aura. We loved the casual yet sophisticated dining in this romantic country setting. It is a place that makes everyone feel welcome. Per-



Filet Mignon

enjoyed the Lemon Marinated Chicken with Basmati Rice, Au Jus and Vegetables which included fresh seasonal carrots and string beans. It was cooked in a steel pan so it stayed quite moist and allowed the sauce to add an elegantly refreshing taste. You will love this entrée.

As ever we were happy to have saved room for Desserts. They were all worthy but our favorite was the sticky Chocolate Molten Cake with Hazelnut Cream. Not too sweet...just perfection!. For the non chocolate fans we recommend the Pear and Blueberry Crisp with Vanilla Bean Ice Cream. There is no better dessert than an excellent crisp like this, especially when rich Vanilla Bean ice cream tops it off. It was just delicious. Last but not least was an excellent rendition of one of our favorites, Chocolate Crème Brule with Hazelnuts. You really can't go wrong with any of the desserts and with coffee, or an after dinner port it truly adds to a meal.

The Wine List features many local Sonoma Wineries. We really enjoyed the 2001 Toad Hollow, North Coast Sauvignon Blanc, Francine's Selection. It paired well with the Crab Cakes and Salmon. The 2001 Patsy Vineyards, Green Valley Pinot Noir added to our enjoyment of

haps we'll see you there for lunch or on another evening or for one of their upcoming Special Events such as The La Dolce V Chocolate Valentine Dinner on February 14, 2004, The Toad Hollow Winery Dinner on February 26, 2004, or The Carol Shelton Winery Dinner on March 25, 2004. We'll surely be back again soon to try some of the best cuisine Sonoma County has to offer.

POST NOTES:

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Open

Lunch
 Mon, Wed, Thurs, Fri, Sat
 11:30AM- 2:30 PM
 Dinner
 Mon, Wed, Thurs, Fri,
 Sat, Sun 5:30 PM- Closing
 Closed Tuesday

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EPICUREAN EPISODES



Crab Cakes



Asparagus Salad



Scottish Salmon