

Lori's Picks



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We decided to review Portofino's Italian Ristorante just as they opened the first week in September. Anthony Adonnino, Anthony Bennice, Louis Bennice, and Michael Bennice, owners of Home Style Caterers, have taken over the reins of Portofino and have done an excellent job in remodeling the restaurant and bar for a superb dining, wedding, and corporate party experience. The executive chef and part owner, Justin Engineri, a veteran of Home Style's catering kitchen, and former executive chef at Silver Hills Restaurant, prepared us a truly noteworthy veritable feast.

The building itself is perfectly suited to Portofino's charming ambiance. A front entrance nook with tables for two to eight, an elevated spacious bar area for those desiring a more casual dining experience, and an expansive well-designed catering and dining area for weddings and corporate parties.

The food reflects the décor: delightful and "nuovo Italiano," with some innovative notes. Dense, crusty bread paired with a flavorful olive oil started our meal on a classically perfect note. The evening's appetizer hit

was grilled asparagus and prosciutto di Parma with grana padano cheese, honey, lemon, extra virgin olive oil, and basil crema. The flavors were balanced expertly and the asparagus was cooked with skill. We also tasted the crispy baby mozzarella with parsley coulis and cream cheese ranch. I was overwhelmed with scrumptious flavors and textures melding into one exceptional bite after another. The soup du jour was Portofino's tomato bisque—seasonal tomatoes simmered with garlic and basil and blended with a crema—a smooth and creamy concoction that pleased the palate and the soul. The insalata giardino consisted of a fresh blend of mixed greens with tomatoes, red onion, carrots and a basil balsamic dressing. It was a fresh verdant delight and a great way to end our appetizers and prepare our taste buds for the main courses to come.

The Pollo alla Marsala, which was a tender chicken breast sautéed with Portobello mushrooms, garlic and shallots tossed in a sweet Marsala sauce, came with a side of homemade pappardelle served al dente—just the way I love it. The juiciness of the chicken, earthiness of the mushrooms and the sweetness of the sauce made

for one standout dish. My guest indulged in the succulent veal chop with sautéed and roasted shitake, beech, and oyster mushrooms. It was so good we were still singing its praises days later. We also sampled and were amazed by the caramelized diver's scallops with pistachio pesto and roasted vegetables. Sweet, savory, and simply luscious.

Now for dessert...we relished in a phenomenal sampler tray: crème brulee duo—vanilla custard with pina colada banana coconut custard with bruleed pineapple topped with a caramelized sugar crust; an authentic Italian mascarpone espresso tiramisu; and a cold and creamy gelato sundae with stracciatella gelato rich chocolate sauce, and a sprinkling of pistachio and almonds to top it off. Each dessert was heavenly and it was evident that great care went into the planning of the menu.

Anthony Adonnino and Executive Chef Justin Engineri have a true winner with their new establishment. If you are looking for an outstanding Italian meal with a lovely ambiance, Portofino's is the place to be! We definitely applaud them toward their new success.