

Matter of Taste

Un‘Cork’ St. Armands’ Latest Delight

Finally, after what seems to be years of agonizing construction delays involving zoning, planning, contractors, vendors and the meteorologists at the National Weather Service, the Cork & BottleShop is ready for me to show off to my old college chums who are visiting.

This new construction is a Modern looking double-decker for foodies. Bold lines and minimalist spacing speak to the trendy style of this new Sarasota look amongst the severely aged architecture of the Spanish Mediterraneanists. This upscale new look is of the very highest quality and worth the wait.

The street-level rooms are dedicated to the more casual “BottleShop” dining starting at around eleven for lunch. The more elegant Cork naturally sits atop the bottle (upstairs or up-elevator) on the second floor with nice views of St. Armands foot traffic and alley life. My old friends visiting from college days at Indiana enjoyed the occasional cool evening breeze and “looking down on the peasants”.

Susan’s Choice: Parmesan Black Pepper Biscuits (\$10)...My old pal Susan, now married to my old pal/landlord Gordon, was in charge of the appetizer. Her sharp eye spotted others having the biscuit appetizer and so she conducted a quick point-of-purchase market study, “Hey, you guys over there in the corner booth... What’s that ya got there? Little ham sandwiches? Kantcha afford a regular sized sandwich?”

Well, they were smallish biscuits, and they did contain a slice of very delicate, dried, French Bayonne Ham with a sparse dollop of green herb mayonnaise. They also had fresh-grated parmesan (not the stuff from the green canister) and cracked pepper jelly for good measure. Well done Susan, your research worked out well.



Critic’s Choice: Orange and Coriander Encrusted Tuna (\$33) is a generous portion of precisely prepared (seared) Ahi tuna which just melted in your mouth. It was served with the braised fennel, stewed tomato, olives and pine nuts.

The highlights of the entrees that evening are of universal acclaim. We all enjoyed our particular plates. I also strongly recommend the following:

Mrs. Critic’s Choice: the Prime New York Strip Steak (\$42) with mushrooms and a grainy mustard demi-glace. They give the “really” prime beefsteak

a nice salt & sugar rub and cook it to your specifications.

Gordon’s Choice: the Frisee & Lardon Salad (\$11) was Neuske slab bacon, warm Cognac, citrus and shallot vinaigrette and a duck egg poached in Perrier water. He also enjoyed the Haricots Verts (\$7).

Contact for reservations which are becoming more and more necessary in the evening at the Cork...call (941) 388-4500 or (941) 388-1675.

Location: 29 N. Boulevard of Presidents, St. Armands Circle, Sarasota. Cork & BottleShop is on the southbound side of the street, so you’ll have to come back around after you turn off the circle.

Dress: This is a nice restaurant. You should put some effort into selecting a nice frock. The alternative is to just lay back at the downstairs BottleShop.

Hours: Open 5:30 to 10 p.m. daily. Wheelchair-accessible (elevator for upstairs).

Payment: Major credit cards.