



Feast And Film

Rosas's And From Paris With Love

By Teri Bayus

A hhhh, consistency, romance, culinary delights, and perfect service. It is always so good to go home to Rosa's. This restaurant is hands down the best anywhere. The staff is phenomenal, our waiter remembered that two months ago when we came for dinner, I drank the house Sangovaise and Gary the single malt scotch. We came with friends and everything about the meal was impressive. Rosa's is tucked away at the entrance to Price Street, but it is the go-to spot when you want to impress visiting guests or business acquaintances. We had dear friends visiting, so we took no chances and booked a table at Rosa's. Lauren greeted us with a smile and the best table.

Gary started with the specialty dessert - a Chocolate Tangelo. Two scoops of chocolate/tangelo gelato served in a frosted dish with a cannelloni with mascarpone and candied bird nest decoration with an accompanying orange soaked in plum wine so it was so sweet he ate the rind. He was kind and offered to share, a feat I think only happened because we were with guests.

The rest of us started with the calamari appetizer. Fried crisp, these tubes and tentacles were perfectly cooked and dunked in a house-made cocktail sauce and a cilantro cream dipping green sauce that brought out the essence of the ocean when combined.



The owner, Bill, came to join us for a glass of wine and told funny jokes and sweet stories about his late wife. Then he brought us a taste of his newest concoction, a swirly pasta sautéed in a white wine olive oil sauce with hunks of fennel and sausage; An original taste that ended with a touch of fire. We all agreed it should be put on the specialty menu. I love that he is trying to bring the Italian palate to California.

I started with the Tuna Capriccio with a thin layer of smoked ahi tuna covered with arugula leaves, onions, and capers. Capers are my favorite fruit and this dish holds both large and small ones. When eating this, I am in salty heaven. I have never seen it offered anywhere else, and I could eat it every day.

Then I had an appetizer as an entrée, as the special menu beckoned to my senses. This mastermind dish consisted of large scallops wrapped in prosciutto resting on a bed of sautéed spinach and caramelized parmesan cheese. It was a symphony of flavors, and I inhaled it as if it was my last meal.

Gary had the Brianna Platter Special, which is named after the chef's daughter and always a hit. It is a huge manicotti with a spinach ricotta covered in a flavorful tomato sauce and beef cannelloni. He was awed at the sheer size of the dishes and the remarkable flavor.

Even though it is an Italian restaurant, our compadre swears they have the best steak filets. Confirmed by Chef Doug McMillan to be the best from Creekside Farm, where the flavor of free-range beef is outstanding and the benefits many, he devoured every inch of this medium-rare hunk of beef. We tried a bite, and it astounded us. Accompanied by the saffron risotto and sliced tomatoes, this was a well-balanced and mouth-watering repast.

Our friend ordered the same scallops on a bed of greens. She shared one scallop with my husband, something I clearly wasn't going to do, so she was the hero. Rosa's offers a full bar so we toasted with some lemoncello to the superior night, virtuous friends and illustrious provisions.

We finished with a visit from the chef, Doug, as he told proud family stories and the reason why this is the best restaurant on the Central Coast. "Passion, love and family," it is their mantra and I agree whole-heartedly. We sipped our port and planned our next trip to the corner table on the patio.

Last week was Rome and this week Paris and neither movie moved me to visit either grand city. In fact, I think it should be a law that if you put the word "Love" in a title of a picture, it is a romance. Not that From Paris With Love wasn't a love story for those whose testosterone levels equal that of a cave man, meaning my husband loved it, but I almost rolled my eyes out of my head.

Our story starts with a long dose of James Reece (Jonathan Rhys Meyers). He's the personal aid to the U.S. Ambassador to France. Known for book smarts, his side task of spying for his country affords him the opportunity to place bugs and switch license plates. His live-in girlfriend, Caroline, (Kasia Smutniak) has to deal with being kept in the dark. When the opportunity for more dangerous work presents itself, Reece is given a partner in the form of Charlie Wax (John Travolta). Wax is a fast-talking, trigger-happy, manic who does as he pleases. Cue shootouts, car chases and some good old swearing.

The two J's make for a grand team. On one end, you have Reece leading the audience into the underground world of mayhem while trying to keep his wits about him. On the other, there is the everyman's adrenaline junkie (Travolta is swoony) who may not be too old just yet. For what it's worth, in a throwaway action flick, there is a genuine sense of fun in the air.

On paper, there was some potential for the movie, as director Pierre Morel knows how to handle the action. Unfortunately, he keeps staging one loud set piece after the other, leaving no time for breath or, more crucially, character development. The villains are bland (no prizes for guessing their origin), the sudden "twist" pretty much phoned-in and the final act was just plain embarrassing. As for the script's blatant film references ("Wax on, wax off" and a quote from Pulp Fiction), they were probably meant to be comic asides but come off as cringe-worthy moments instead.

In short, From Paris With Love should appeal to action-junkies, but wears thin quite fast. Also, why bother to put the city's name in the title when, breakfast on the Eiffel Tower aside, Charlie Wax's violent odyssey could easily have taken place anywhere else? So much for the love.

Teri Bayus can be reached at mailplusismo@aol.com or at Mail Plus in Pismo Beach dreaming about Love in Paris (not shoot-em up).



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