

I ON THE VALLEY

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Basso Cafe: a fine eatery blending the best of Mediterranean and Latin American cuisine

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A menu that crafts fine Mediterranean dishes and then artfully blends them with the flavors of Latin America is what you will find at Basso Cafe and Wine Bar , a wonderful restaurant just south of New Canaan in Norwalk, Ct. This eatery located in a renovated 100 year old house has a modern flair that is more akin to a restaurant in Manhattan than Connecticut. The decor of urban modern with its walls decorated with original art in the hyper realism style signals that the diner is in for an interesting evening.

We started our meal with a cocktail and there is a nice selection including the Apricot Martini made with flying point vodka, la quintine vermouth blanc, apricot balsamic vinegar. A delicious concoction. We also sampled the Paloma a mix of blanco tequila, red grapefruit juice, fresh grapefruit reduction, and a lime wedge which is evidence of the Latin American influence in the menu. Very refreshing.



Apricot Martini, the stars are out at Basso

Appetizers/tapas were up next and there is a wide selection for the diner that can be shared or enjoyed alone. Again the theme of Mediterranean and Latin American selections were evident and provided many interesting choices. We enjoyed the Gnocchi prepared with homemade potato gnocchi with creamy shitake mushroom sauce drizzled with 36-month old white truffle oil (\$12) The Gnocchi was soft and smooth and melted in your mouth and the truffle oil was a perfect complement to this classic Italian dish.



Latin American influence came in the form of our next dish, the Arepas (\$8) and we opted for the vegetarian style preparation which was authentic Venezuelan corn cakes filled with refried black beans and cheese. The dish can also be made with chicken. Another tasty dish was the Calamari a la Plancha (\$12) sautéed calamari on the griddle, olive oil, garlic & light crushed peppers. Light and delicious and the calamari was lightly seared to enrich the flavors.

For the main course there are 16 dishes available along with evening specials. Meat, and fish dishes are dominant with an eggplant dish as the vegetarian option. It would be nice to see this expanded to include more options. There are 5 salads to choose from if so decides. We sampled the Eggplant Parmagiana prepared in the traditional style and was excellent. (\$24).



The Sea Scallops(\$31) was a fantastic choice with lightly seared Maine sea scallops over creamy polenta with crispy pancetta served with shaved asparagus and truffle vinaigrette. The contrast between the light crisp of the seared fresh scallops and the soft warm polenta was delightful and a perfect comfort food on a cold winter evening.



Sea Scallops and Polenta

Our other dish was the Halibut from the evening special menu which served over polenta and accented with a fine port wine sauce. The freshness of the ingredients was evident with every bite. This might be an item the chef may want to incorporate into the menu. I was very happy with my selection.



Halibut with Polenta in a port wine sauce

If you have room for desserts, there are 8 selections from \$9-\$16 as well as after dinner drinks and dessert wines and coffee and tea.

Basso Cafe is a delightful restaurant and Chef/owner Renato Donzelli has crafted a fine menu of Mediterranean dishes with just enough Latin American influence to make the evening one of culinary adventure. Add a hip urban Mediterranean atmosphere and you have a restaurant I know I will be dining at real soon.

Basso Cafe

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