

Gracious service, stellar soufflé



Tuna tartare with guacamole

Review

Caffe Regatta

133 Wolfs Lane, Pelham, 914-738-8686

Price
Appetizers \$7 to \$15; shellfish \$12 to \$34; entrees \$17 to \$27; lobsters \$19 a pound.

Recommended
Spinach salad, King salmon, braised short ribs, chocolate soufflé

Who goes?
The whole neighborhood

Hours
Closed Mondays. Lunch 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Tuesday to Friday, dinner 4 p.m. to 11 p.m. Tuesday to Thursday, until midnight Friday and Saturday, until 9 p.m. Sunday. Sunday brunch 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Credit cards
All major
Reservations
Suggested
Noise level
Quiet to moderate

Parking
On the street
Accessibility
Entrance is ramped and bathrooms are fully accessible

Published
May 19, 2005

bottomline B-



Line-caught Florida grouper with fingerling potatoes and steamed French green beans.

Photos by Tom Nycz/The Journal News

In Pelham, neighborhood bistro with platters of seafood

JUDITH HAUSMAN
For The Journal News

"Oh, cute little crab-cakes," I murmured at the bread-crumbed discs on either side of my glossy spinach salad.

"That would be the goat cheese," our waiter said tactfully.

"Of course," I fumbled, and we chuckled together. This easy accommodation is the strength of Caffe Regatta. At 10:30 p.m., when we were finishing dinner, an attractive couple peeked in the door.

"Are we too late?" they asked.
"Of course not," responded the kind waiter as he ushered them in, settling them at the table in the big front windows.

Caffe Regatta has filled the contemporary bistro niche in Pelham since 2001. Shellfish towers and raw bar items are popular here. The cool green walls and comfortable, no-fuss interior are soothing. The wine list is moderately priced and sensible. But the restaurant has gotten a little rusty since I last reviewed it in 2002.

That spinach salad — with walnuts, chewy, sliced roasted pears with a glaze of fruity port vinaigrette and the satisfying goat cheese alongside — turned out to be our best appetizer. The real crabcakes were sadly bready and dry, and the spill of black bean salsa with them was salty enough to obscure all other flavor.

A special salad on the \$30 three-course, prix-fixe menu combined lobster and mango. Unfortunately the fruit was not ripe enough to create the balance you're looking for in a summery dish like this. Shrimp dumplings were light enough, steamed and served with an interesting garnish of diced green beans and mushrooms.

Braised short ribs were among four choices on the prix-fixe menu. The beef was faithfully tender and deeply flavored, and the bitter broccoli rabe with it was clothed in garlic. An entree from the regular menu didn't compare. Slice of roast lamb was so overcooked and tough it was almost uncuttable. Sliced sweet potato was an uninspired, unseasonal garnish.

Homemade ravioli filled with gorgonzola, sundried tomatoes and shrimp also suffered from too much salt, especially with minced prosciutto in the sauce. Our most re-



A view of the dining room at Caffe Regatta in Pelham.

finied entree was delicately simple King salmon, poised sparsely, almost Japanese-style, on a rectangular plate with thin, potato-slice scales and a thick stick of roasted beet.

Our Duck Pond Pinot Noir 2002, for \$26, was a lighter example of Oregon's fine reds with moderate body, lively cherry flavors and bright color.

Desserts were better than I expected. A tiny, buttery plum tart was drowned in caramel gelato. A chocolate "soufflé" actually performed: when we unwrapped the cylinder, it became a scene-stealing chocolate puddle all over the plate. We stopped just short of licking the waxed paper that had held it together.

I suspect we have may have missed the point somewhat at Caffe Regatta by not sticking to raw bar and lobsters. Nevertheless this is, as ever, a competent local bistro. The food was attractive, if not exciting, and the service was solicitous and professional. Chef-owner Anthony Labriola wants "everyone to leave with a good feeling." I think they usually do, but a tune-up of the details would refresh what they have to offer.

In brief A tidy, reliable bistro, Caffe Regatta provides with welcome, if not with flair.

What do you think?

Tell us your experiences at Caffe Regatta — (positive and/or negative) via e-mail — under 25 words, please — at theline@thejournalnews.com. We'll choose a cross-section and print a sample of them next week in feedback.

insider

Prix fixe here is a very good deal.