

Bintliff's Restaurant Review

By Alan Bennett Ilagan

While Five-O and Joe Allen's duke it out down below, a quiet winner has emerged just a bit further up US Route One. **Bintliff's Restaurant** was one of the highlights of this past season in Ogunquit, offering what may be some of the best steaks in town, and a comprehensive wine list to match. Where other places bow to what's trendy or tried, Bintliff's presents simply excellent food, flawlessly cooked, and served with elegance and panache.

The atmosphere, while heavy on Christopher Lowell-like flourishes, is far more lively and stimulating than the rather austere mood at Joe Allen's. Featuring a festive bar and wine scene, the bar section isn't as crowded or out-of-control as Five-O gets on the weekend. Velvet chairs and antique couches pepper the lounge area, an inviting and cozily-lit space charmingly conducive to conversation, and perfect for enjoying that first glass of wine.

Indeed, what may be Bintliff's strongest claim-to-fame is its extensive wine list. Wine is serious business here, served in deep glasses and intended to be sniffed and savored. My companion settled on a St. Francis Cabernet Sauvignon ~ rich, smooth, and velvety in taste and texture. For those with something stronger in mind, these folks know how to make it. The martinis here are no small matter ~ generous and ample, with full-bodied queen olives ~ they go down easy and come as dry as you like them.

Freshly-made Tuscan bread arrives warm and whets the palate for a large selection of appetizers and salads, but save some room because the entrees here are more than bounteous. Steaks rule supreme and rightfully take pride-of-place on the menu. Expect beautiful cuts of meat, cooked to perfection, and don't be crass enough to order any over medium-well. The pan-seared swordfish special was succulently prepared ~ two smaller cuts replaced the traditional single swordfish steak, and in this instance it worked, as both seemed to have been cooked more uniformly than the usual solitary slab of fish. Don't overlook the last entry on the menu ~ the Eggplant Napoleon. A scrumptious assault on all taste fronts, this dish combines crispy eggplant,

tomatoes, braised onions, fresh mozzarella, roasted red peppers, and marinated portobello mushrooms for an exquisite rendering of Italian flavor.

“Sides of starches” accompany the entrees, the best of which is a combination of sweet potatoes and garlic mashed potatoes that was an unexpected but agreeable coupling. Though at first glance the vegetables looked like standard fare, they had a pleasantly surprising kick ~ delicate, but potent ~ an impressive synthesis of seasonings.

Last but most definitely not least, the crème brulee was perfection ~ a mouthful of sinfully rich sweetness that was just the right consistency ~ smooth, silky, heavenly.

For the most part the service at Bintliff’s matches the wonderful food. Our first night found the wait-staff impeccable – courteous, personable, attentive and efficient. On our second evening there seemed to be a problem behind-the-scenes as our waiter disappeared for an eternity and re-appeared apologizing for the delay. Of course, on Labor Day weekend such setbacks are to be expected. They certainly didn’t deter anyone from enjoying the meal, and kinks like this are part of any new restaurant. A promising beginning for a restaurant that clearly knows its food.

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US Route One

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