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A Delightful Dining Experience

[MIKE LOWE]

Chef Stephen Treadwell, after a successful tenure at Queen's Landing in Niagara-on-the-Lake, along with his son James, a certified Sommelier, has opened his own restaurant. Open just over a month, the farm-to-table theme is already drawing accolades and rightly so. Chef Treadwell takes the freshest ingredients, many from local producers, and creates dishes of elegant simplicity. Situated on the bank of the old Welland Canal, the dominant blue colour scheme of the restaurant creates harmony with its surroundings, while tan accents add a touch of earthiness. The restaurant evokes a casual sophistication as evidenced by the lounge area. Stainless steel bar accents, pine floors and comfortable leather chairs make it the perfect place to sip a before-dinner cocktail or after-dinner drink. The bar carries a few impressive draft beers including a couple from St. Ambroise [Quebec], one of my personal favourite breweries. A large, sun-drenched patio awaits those who prefer al fresco dining. Treadwell's menu is a Prix Fixe [fixed price] menu offering three courses for \$48 per person. Choosing one of the five options for each course is harder than it seems because everything sounds appealing. My choices; Prosciutto with Shaved Pear, Parmesan Cheese, Lemon Confit and Arugula; Cumbrae Farms Beef Tenderloin with vanilla Celery root puree; Vanilla Orange Cheesecake with Star Anise Syrup. I asked to have James Treadwell suggest the wine pairings for my first and second courses. If anyone can get you excited about wine, Mr. Treadwell can. His calm demeanour gives way to a passion for wine that bubbles to the surface as he shares his expertise. The wine list has some great selections and the best part is that the by-the-glass choices can be ordered in 3oz. or 6oz. servings, perfect for pairing with each course without ordering too much.

The first course, made from local, not imported, Prosciutto, is one of the finest you'll ever taste. Chef Treadwell's marriage of tangy lemon confit, sweet pear, and peppery arugula provides contrast to the salty ham and Parmesan cheese. Peninsula Ridge's Sauvignon Blanc, with its crisp acidity and citrus notes, paired perfectly with the dish. My dinner companion, with some coaxing, offered me a taste of her selection; Pressed Duck Confit and Parsley Terrine, an equally beautiful composition of flavour and texture. The beef tenderloin, seasoned and cooked to perfect medium, was succulent and just right for pairing with the Saint Julia Malbec [Argentina]. I found the chives in the celery root puree a welcome addition, although dominating, rendering the vanilla indiscernible. The orange cheesecake with a soft crumble style crust was rich, yet delicate enough for the hint of licorice from the star anise syrup to complement it adequately. Do not pass up the chance to enjoy your bread, served with the meal, with the exceptional oils and vinegars offered alongside. The cold pressed canola oil has a nutlike flavour and pairs wonderfully with the Baco Noir/blueberry vinegar. Each course was presented, and explained upon request by our server. Service is excellent, professional, and attention to detail prevails.

Dinner is served between 5pm and 10pm. Treadwell's also has a lunch menu, served from 12 noon-4:30 pm. Prices range from \$6-12 for first courses, \$9-16 for main courses, and \$8 for desserts. For those without a sweet tooth a selection of artisan cheeses is available for \$12. Menus are posted on the restaurant's web site. I have heard many comments that suggest Port Dalhousie is not ready for a restaurant of this caliber. Try telling that to the diners that contributed to a half-full house by 6:30 pm on this particular Friday evening. It's hard to ignore the facts. Sure, you'll easily spend \$100+ dining here, but I've spent that much and more eating food that is not of the caliber that Treadwell's offers. What's more, you can take a romantic stroll along the pier after dinner.

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