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DINING | MILFORD

Odd Name, Top-Notch Service

By STEPHANIE LYNESS

BIN 100 RESTAURANT's quirky name is a play on its address, 100 Lansdale Street, married to a bit of wine terminology. Wine cellars traditionally store their bottles in numbered bins, said Elena Fusco, the owner, and her collection, displayed behind glass doors at the back of the dining room, holds 100 numbered bins of six bottles apiece.

Specializing in what Ms. Fusco calls contemporary Mediterranean cuisine, Bin 100 opened its doors in Milford in December 2007.

The restaurant is done up in a pastiche of textiles and has a nice feel to it. One fabric upholsters the chairs, another is at the windows, another shades the lights that hang over the tables. The back wall is hung with a windowpane-like display of multicolored fabric squares. The colors are warm, and the net result is relaxing.

The service is top notch, both personable and attentive. Specials are relayed with care, and napkins are returned, folded, to the table when you leave your seat.

The food, however, is uneven. The best dishes are the simplest, and those can be quite lovely.

At my first meal, on a recent Sunday night, we ordered two tomato salads: a version of a Caprese (oven-roasted plum tomatoes shingled with fat slices of mozzarella) and a special heirloom tomato salad. The roasted tomatoes on the Caprese were thick and moist, their flavor just brightened by the oven, and the fresh mozzarella was sweet and mild; fresh basil, olive oil and a sprinkle of pine nuts finished the plate.

For the second salad the heirloom tomatoes were served in wedges, tossed with white beans, Asiago cheese, red onion, thick-sliced cucumber and mâche lettuce and dressed with oil and lemon.

We shared a poached, marinated octopus salad (our waiter confessed that it was no longer the preparation listed on the menu), garnished with red and green bell pepper, red onion slices and arugula. It was heavy on the dressing, but tasty.

My entree was a fresh take on chicken Milanese: three thin slabs of chicken breast breaded in crunchy cornmeal, interspersed with a salad of haricot verts, sliced new potato and roasted tomato, the whole drizzled with balsamic vinaigrette. My guest's special veal chop was beautifully cooked, accompanied by a rather soggy risotto garnished with diced portobello mushrooms.

Though the service was even better at my second meal than it was at the first, the cuisine was less successful. Most of the meat or seafood entrees were overcooked, from the less-than-sparklingly-fresh shrimp on my Mediterranean linguine (with artichoke hearts, grape tomatoes, feta cheese and olives) to the chicken medallions on the Valdostana and the salmon special (served with a startling combination of ingredients, including the seasoned Japanese seaweed called hijiki, saffron rice and roasted red pepper). And though the steak was beautifully medium-rare, it was not a strip steak, as advertised.

Appetizers were better. Baby clams were nicely steamed, garnished with tomato, white beans and prosciutto, although there were some broken shells in the mix and the prosciutto could have been cooked less. Meatballs were well seasoned if a bit dry, and the accompanying tomato sauce was fresh and

flavorful. The ubiquitous sliders — two small patties cut in half and sandwiched between miniature hamburger buns — were served with four tiny vanilla milkshakes. These made for a tasty, if odd, appetizer but would constitute terrific bar food for the Monday-to-Friday happy hour.

Two salads — baby spinach with thin-sliced fennel, dried cherries and Gorgonzola; and mesclun with goat cheese and pear — were solid choices. And someone in the kitchen makes wonderful broccoli rabe; ours was tender but not mushy, and well seasoned.

For dessert, a plate of crisp and light churros was a better selection than the tarte Tatin, in which I had trouble discerning the flavor of the apple through the sugar, or the dense tres leches cake.

I hope that my second meal here was an aberration, because there are many things to recommend Bin 100. It would make a particularly good happy-hour destination, where you can get a good deal on appetizers while feeling exceptionally well taken care of.

Bin 100 Restaurant

100 Lansdale Avenue

Milford

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www.bin100restaurant.com

FAIR

THE SPACE Large dining room, divided by a wall of Venetian blinds into two spaces with multicolored décor. Large, comfortable chairs and tables. Separate eat-in bar and lounge area. Wheelchair access.

THE CROWD Diverse group of ages, casually dressed, though the caliber of service creates a semiformal environment.

THE BAR Full bar and substantial wine list (by the bottle, from the low \$20's to \$290; by the glass, \$7 to \$11).

THE BILL Entrees, \$19 to \$28; appetizers, \$7 to \$14.

WHAT WE LIKE Octopus salad, salad Caprese, heirloom tomato salad, baby clams, spinach salad, goat cheese mesclun salad, beef sliders, polpette, broccoli rabe; chicken Milanese, veal chop; churros.

Reviewed Aug. 31, 2008