

Nouveau Redux –Hudson Valley Magazine April 2006

Judging by the crowds clamoring to fill its 200 seats on a Saturday night, there is little doubt that Vertigo is the hottest new restaurant in Nyack, Rockland County. The name obviously refers to the vertiginous views offered from three tiers of seating that line ornate balustrades encircling the central space. But the dramatic verticality implied by this layout could just as easily refer to the restaurant nightclub's upwardly mobile ambitions.

Vertigo is unencumbered by authenticity, preferring instead a touch of Las Vegas (where, incidentally, the same architects created an Irish pub for the New York-New York hotel, which boasts downsized reproductions of the Statue of Liberty and the Brooklyn Bridge). This is Parisian Art Nouveau re-imagined for the suburbs, complete with flat-panel televisions for watching sports. The lineup of special events, such as "Social Networking Night" or "Matchmaker Ball" would have been unthinkable in Guimard's day, but modernity is irrevocably upon us, so who can chide the owners for complying with its demands?

Fortunately, all this ersatz opulence does not affect the food. The gorgonzola-stuffed Medjool dates with prosciutto di Parma, baby arugula, balsamic reduction, and chestnut honey (\$12) did not disappoint. The complexity of sensations was a feast for the taste buds. The Ducktrap River smoked salmon with chive blinis (\$14) was also terrific. Served with cream cheese, red onion, cucumber and wasabi cream around a mound of baby arugula, it was a refreshing, imaginative take on a traditional idea. We washed these down with glasses of a clean, grassy Chateau de Sancerre 2003 (\$8 each). The wine list is less extravagantly priced than you'd expect. Most bottles run \$25 to \$60. But if you're carried away by the glitz of Vertigo, there are several reserve selections in the hundreds of dollars. We were not, we settled instead on a Saint-Emilion Grand cru, Clos La Fleur Figeac 2002 (\$52), which was perfectly respectable.

It went very well with the fillet of peppered pork (\$22), a dish the Chef says regulars requested he keep on the menu even when seasons changed from fall to winter. It's easy to see why. Served with creamed potatoes and mushrooms a la Forestiere, it came bathed in a veal stock reduction – spiked with brandy and smoothed out with cream – that was as deep and mysterious as the Seine on a moonless night.

We finished off with a delicious Amaretto-stuffed pear that had been poached in white wine and served with marscapone, crème anglaise, and chestnut honey (\$8). By now it was 10.30pm and the DJ had just arrived with sound equipment to rev up the post-dinner crowd. One suspects he wasn't going to spin much by Ravel, Debussy or Faure, Nouveau Parisians all. But then, like Vertigo's trappings, verisimilitude is not really the point.