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Amici Trattoria: A taste of Italy in the heart of Shrewsbury

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Written by staff
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By Zeke Williams

You can read 1,000 do's and don'ts in dining from 1,000 food experts, and will probably get about 1,000 different lists.

However, I would venture a guess that one of the few "don'ts" to make every list is: DON'T go more than three weeks without a good Italian meal. As I look at my calendar, it has been roughly four whole weeks for me. I would have to follow my own advice before changing the direction of my glance from the calendar to the mirror.

On a recent weekend evening, my brother Dan, who also was going against the wisdom of the list, joined me for a trip to Amici Trattoria in Shrewsbury.

After tracking down an elusive parking spot, we made our way into the restaurant and were promptly seated in the main room. The room is small, with a bar up front. White lights and posters of Italian cooking are quaint, as the entire setting is custom made for a romantic dining experience.

I told Dan there would be no funny business.

After pounding a few pieces of bread with garlic-enhanced olive oil, we started with an order of the skillet-seared sea scallops (\$10.20), which featured four caramelized portions that were sweet on the surface, heightened by the cranberry reduction sauce, and soft and flavorful on the interior. The scallops rode to the table on a bed of field greens seasoned in balsamic vinegar. Even Dan who is not a big fan of scallops was brought to a "Wow."

One dish you can call Dan an expert in is chicken piccata (\$16.95), which was covered in a buttery white wine sauce. The chicken, even without help from the sauce, was moist and joined with a generous number of capers, all sitting atop some ziti.

Since he only enjoys wine when it is cooked into a sauce, Dan washed it down with a Coke (\$2.35). We also split a side dish of grilled asparagus (\$4.75) that was lightly covered in butter.

Amici has ten specialty dishes on the menu, from which I was craving the pollo con pesto (\$17.95). Slices of that same tender chicken were served with fresh chunks of artichoke hearts and tri-colored cheese ravioli, lathered up in a fresh pesto cream sauce.

I was looking for a sweeter white wine to complement my meal — a task I put on our waitress, Julie. She recommended a Schmitt Sohne Riesling (\$6.50 per glass) that had a honey apple, cyser-style quality to it that complemented a slightly creamier Italian dish. Good call, Julie.

An hour before, as we had waited a few minutes for our table to be cleared, desserts on display had teased us. Despite already finishing hearty portions (with some leftovers destined for the doggie bag), dessert was necessary. The phrase "homemade tiramisu" was all I needed to hear, and I jumped, almost literally out of my seat, at the opportunity. The tiramasu (\$7.75) had light lady fingers covered in cream, chocolate syrup, and was dusted in cinnamon. It probably could have used a little more liqueur worked into the dish, but that was not hindrance enough to put my fork down.

Dan opted the Hawaiian pineapple torte (\$7.75), one of the desserts provided by Wholly Cannoli in Worcester. A heaping helping of fluffy cake was prepared with pineapple, coconut, topped with cream, and drizzled with caramel topping. A cup of coffee (\$2.35) rounded out any other chance for indulging that night.

The bill arrived at \$80.38 after tax (before tip). We thanked Julie one last time, and the two of us headed into the Shrewsbury evening. As I climbed into the car, I caught a glimpse of my reflection in the passenger side mirror — promising never to abandon Italian food for more than three weeks again. o

Last Updated (Thursday, 12 March 2009)

☆☆☆☆☆ Food

☆☆☆☆ 1/2 Ambience

☆☆☆☆ 1/2 Service

☆☆☆☆ Value

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