

*Carol & Joe Davis*FINE DINING
DETECTIVES

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EPICUREAN EPISODES

Risibisi

New Italian-Californian Restaurant & Wine Bar

Partners Marco Palmieri and Chef Fabio Flagiello -- both originally from Trieste, Italy -- have created a fabulous new destination restaurant in Petaluma. The cuisine features modern interpretations of Mediterranean, French, Italian, Californian and Spanish dishes that Chef Fabio learned as he worked in some of the finest restaurants in Europe -- like the Hotel Daniele in Venice, Lenopre in Paris, and Proi Gros in the French countryside. He told us that he knew he wanted to be a chef by the age of nine and was encouraged to live his dream by supportive parents. They told him that it would be hard work but, if he enjoyed it, he'd do fine. He certainly has.

Risibisi has a fun, upbeat atmosphere. The décor features tables in the front, a bar at the back and an exposed brick wall which runs the length of the restaurant. There is interesting art on the walls, including paintings by artist Vicki Daniel and black-and-white photographs by Ann Simms. As we perused the focused menu and listened to light opera in the background, homemade focaccia bread arrived at our table with Nativo Biologico Extra Virgin Olive Oil from Salerno, Italy. We ordered Champagne cocktails to start and settled in to begin our dining experience.

For starters, you must have the delicious Ahi Tuna Tartar with mango petals, Mizuna lettuce and Hoisin white balsamic reduction. The Ahi was extremely fresh and the mango was a great complement. We also really enjoyed the Harry's Bar Carpaccio. It was fabulous beef tenderloin (cut a bit thicker than usual for ease in sharing!) with Parmigiano, capers and extra virgin olive oil. Salad lovers will enjoy the Organic Baby Beet Salad with arugula, dry Ricotta, blackberries and caramelized pecans.

We were all pleased with our entrées. Fish lovers will surely enjoy the Pan Roasted Alaskan Halibut with lobster bisque, grilled Portobello and asparagus. It was perfectly moist and truly flavorful. The Lamb Duet consisted of a braised shoulder, a grilled Colorado Chop with a fabulous baked pear, grilled polenta and snap peas. It was delicious, as well, and served in a hearty portion. The New York Steak with potato and artichoke frito misto, heirloom tomato, and Kennebec fries was exquisite. Risotto fans will enjoy the Risi e Bisi, which is Risotto with lobster tail, chiodini mushrooms, peas and Parmigiano. It's a terrific variation on the classic northern Italian dish (rice and peas or risi e bisi) that gives the restaurant its name.

The Wine List features

some excellent and reasonable selections from Spain, Italy, France, Australia and California. There is a Wine Cellar and a Wine Room, which is available for Special Events. The 2005 Valley of The Moon Chardonnay, Glen Ellen, California paired well with the Ahi, Halibut and Risi e Bisi. The 2004 Ciliegiole San Givese Sassotondo, Tuscany, Italy paired well with the Carpaccio and Lamb Duet. Marco also had us try Rubrato Aglianici dei Fuedi di San Gregorio, made from grapes grown on the slopes of Mount Vesuvius. He said you could taste the ancient ash. We could. It's a good story and a very good wine.

We lingered over our delicious desserts, a Pistachio Crème Brule and a Chocolate "Bomb". Espresso and Cockburn 20-year-old Tawny Port provided a perfect finish to our dining experience. Risibisi is a welcome addition to Petaluma's Fine Dining scene. Partners Marco Palmieri and Chef Fabio Flagiello have created a lively enjoyable restaurant. Stop by soon. You'll become a regular.

*Ahi Tuna Tartar**Harry's Bar Carpaccio**Pan Roasted Alaskan Halibut**Chocolate "Bomb", Homemade Tiramisu and Pistachio Crème Brule**Marco Palmieri (left) and Fabio Flagiello*

POST NOTES:

Risibisi

154 Petaluma Blvd North
Petaluma
phone 707-766-7600
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risibisirestaurant.com
Open for Dinner
Sun through Thurs
5-10 PM
Friday & Saturday
5-11 PM
Open for Lunch
Mon through Sat
11:30-3 PM
Sunday brunch