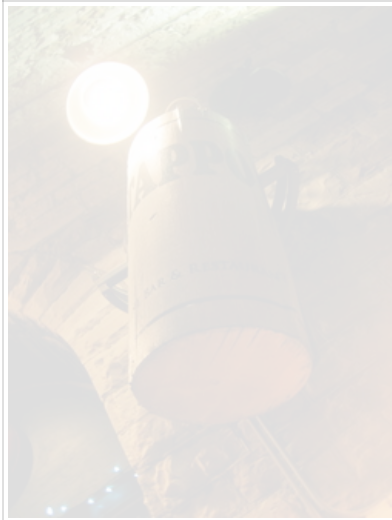




Review: What's on TAPPO?

12/04/2011

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Sometimes I wish I were my husband so I wouldn't have to make supper. And then I realize if I were that guy without someone to cook for me I'd probably resort to foodstuffs – like ketchup – for supper.

So sometimes you just have to treat yourself, or sometimes you're lucky enough to have [Samba Days](#) treat you to a gift experience.

And for those of you who are so practical that you'd rather put that money to the hydro bill than treating yourself, your friends can get you a Samba Days gift experience for Christmas, forcing you to put yourself before the electricity.

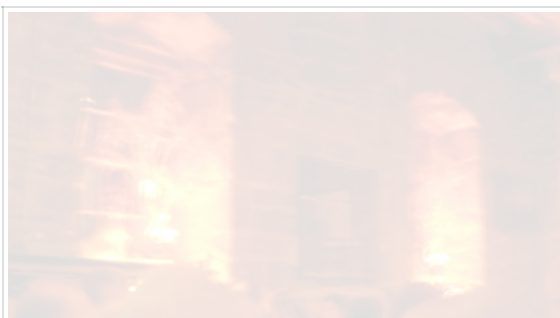
As a [Sambassador](#), I've been afforded opportunities to do [lots of cool things](#). Among some of the fun times I've had, [I went tubing and ziplining](#), been pampered with spa treatments, learned to create espresso foam art like an aspiring barista, and had the opportunity to DJ wiki-wiki-wiki style, alongside my husband OCD-J.

And my latest addition to this list: date night at [TAPPO Wine Bar and Restaurant](#) in Toronto's trendy Distillery District.

From our first steps into the Distillery, it felt like we had walked onto a lavish backlot of a Hollywood movie. Old stone and wood buildings surrounded the cobblestone path, with white lights strewn above our heads in web-like patterns.

That's not all. Add in the carousel, the Ferris wheel, and bunch of extras not even phased by the zero degree night, then lay a spirited music track over it, and you've got a romantic comedy [starring Launy and Dahlia](#) AKA Chico and Sweetness. (With the two of us, [emphasis on the comedy part](#), which I in fact find quite romantic).

You know what else is romantic? Eating. And by that I mean it's a romance between my food and me. I love food. (So much so that I've worked hard to turn unhealthy superduperlicious recipes into [healthy superduperlicious recipes](#).)



So, we enter TAPPO and we discover what feels like an old winery in Tuscany that has adjusted to the 21st century.

Stone, cave-like walls, dark wood, white tablecloths, warm glowing lights ... With ambience like this, tasty food becomes even tastier. (And good-looking company becomes even good-looking-er. Low lights are everybody's friends.)



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Now, as a vegetarian, I've had every restaurant's typical salad, grilled or otherwise, and I've also had every restaurant's typical pasta and red sauce or pasta and vegetables dish. Yawn.

TAPPO takes typical and de-typifies it (and I don't use alliteration lightly).

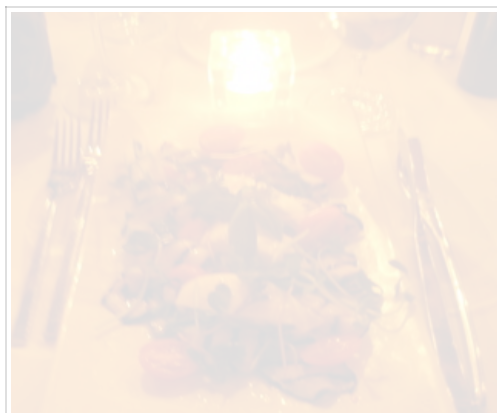
The posh spot is known for its wine selection, while I'm known for just selecting sweet wines. So I ordered the sweetest rosé on the menu and we were off ...

My antipasto: Insalata di zucchini alla griglia (\$16)

This is grilled zucchini (almost shaved), basil, sweet cherry tomatoes, with real-deal buffalo mozzarella (so real-deal you want to say it with an Italian accent: booffaloh mozzarella) ... BUT, the dealbreaker, a preserved lemon chili dressing.

The first few ingredients may not seem so different from other grilled veg salads, but the dressing is what takes this dish to another level – that level where you want to demand more.

The lemon chili preserve atop the three clouds of *booffaloh* mozzarella is somewhat reminiscent of a savoury lemon meringue pie. The brightness of the lemon sparkles in your mouth, while the chili subtly hits in the background to awaken your palette. And you actually taste the vegetables in a whole new way. Brilliant.



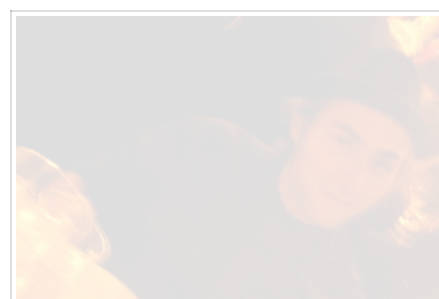
His antipasto (also vegetarian-friendly, but meat-eater approved): Arrancini ai funghi (\$13)

A trio of fried mushroom and truffle risotto balls in an herbed panko crust, sitting atop a dip-worthy portion of tomato sauce and fresh herbs. But after the word "truffle" were any other words even necessary? Enough said.

My primo piatto: Ravioli ai fughi di bosco (\$24)

I was hesitant to order this dish with wild mushroom ravioli and sundried tomatoes in a creamy Parmigiano sauce, because it sounded too rich for my oxygen rich runner's blood. So, in ordering it I resolved to wipe away the excess sauce, but there was no excess. Each perfectly al dente raviolo was delicately coated in the cheesy cream.

Though the dish was rich, it was concentrated – [like me](#) – so you can enjoy the moderate splurge. (And I must confess, there was a little sauce left in the end – well actually there wasn't after I got through with it.)

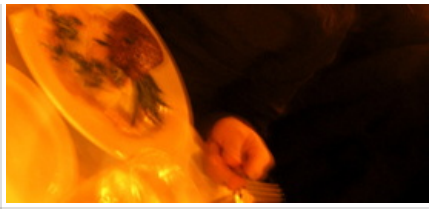


His secondo piatto: Filetto di manzo alla griglia (\$38)

As a [vegetarian](#), I must use my omnivore counterpart's words to describe his pan seared and peppercorn encrusted beef tenderloin. (Although his herbed mashed potatoes and fine green beans with Gorgonzola cream looked good to me.) So, in his words:

"_____."

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”

That’s right. The man who never stops talking stopped talking. He just ate.

After which, he explained the mashed potatoes had lovely bits of homestyle potato chunks, the greens beans were crisp and unduly flavourful for green beans, and the steak was cooked perfectly to order, while the peppercorn sauce was lightly spiced, but done just right. His only complaint was that he would’ve loved to have more peppercorn sauce on the plate – or in a large glass.

Dessert: Tiramisu

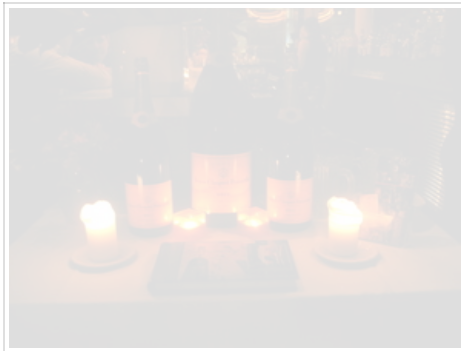
If you decide to share the tiramisu, don’t. Don’t share it that is.

Yes, it is a cliché dessert to order at an Italian restaurant. But the indulgence was not cliché at all. Thankfully, I managed to steal most of the berries, including the gooseberry for the win. (Never ignore the fruit when it comes with dessert. That’s criminal. The only exception is if I’m with you. Then, you should give me all the fruit that comes with it.)



The coffee flavour shone through each bite of the tiramisu, but never overwhelmed it. And though it is deceptively light and silky, you know the mascarpone is indubitably decadent, but ultimately that’s okay, because it is calorie-free.

In reality, the whole night was calorie-free – all special occasions are, right?



All in all, TAPPO is an ambient-rich restaurant, with gracious servers and speedy service. But reservations are a must. Though people wanted in so bad, all agreed to the hour and a half wait.

Also it is especially great for dates. (And just because you’re married, it doesn’t mean you stop dating, you just stop dating other people, save your spouse.)

With delightful dishes, and real flowers on the table, the wine bar and restaurant sets itself apart from the norm, offering something for everyone from omnivores to [fussy](#)

[vegetarian cookbook writers](#). And it’s an ideal gift for those who don’t offer enough to themselves.

So go for it. It’s time to indulge. Do it. Try it. And get your own tiramisu.

([See all our TAPPO date night pictures here.](#))



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