

Restaurant Sole

"Let The Sunflowers Shine"

July 4th weekend is certainly not the easiest time to review restaurants. It appears that fewer Long Islanders are daring to battle the Long Island Expressway to points out east, but prefer to frequent the increasing amount of new restaurants popping up along the South Shore.

I came to hear of Sole by word of mouth. The restaurant is tucked away off Long Beach Road in a corner building where Merle and Oceanside Roads meet. After we valet parked the car, we entered the packed bar filled with anxious and hungry diners waiting for their tables. The theme of this eatery is sunflowers, albeit "Sole", Sol in Spanish, and like the sun, offers a sense of warmth and comfort. Sunflowers grace the walls and sprout from ceramic vases throughout the two dining rooms. From our first order at the bar where the bartender spread a little sunshine with a gracious smile to the friendly managers and wait staff, we were treated with the utmost hospitality.

This is a family restaurant and last Friday night, there were many there. It is definitely a noisy crowd, and with all the tables filled along with the bar, you definitely have to raise your decibel level over the crowd to be heard. It has a lively, bubbly effect, but is not the place to take your girlfriend if you are planning to propose.

The food is outstanding! Joe Bonacore and Bobby Carmacino, owners and chefs create exotic specials nightly and we were treated to the four course extravaganza which was both palate pleasing and presented as an art form. A basket of bread with breadsticks, Italian bread and rolls were accompanied by the garnish of Mediterranean salad spreads, hummus and chopped eggplant, which could have been a bit spicier, for my taste. The black and green olives added a necessary spark for me.

An appetizer of fresh shrimp and filet mignon with horseradish pancetta in a demi glaze atop a small piece of Italian bread and a sprig of rosemary started off our dining adventure. It was absolutely delicious. The evening's special salad followed, a chopped mozzarella and tomato with haricotes vertes (baby string beans) and pistacio nuts in a white balsamic vinaigrette sandwiched between fried wontons. It was quite tasty and the use of the fried wontons and pistachios illustrates the chef's unique flair for invention.

For the entrée of the evening we were served the St. Peters fish encrusted with sundried tomatoes, served in a roasted red pepper beurre blanc sauce with whipped potatoes and julienne vegetables. This was tasty but a bit bland

for my palate, but apparently is a crowd pleaser for those frequent diners to whom they cater who seem to err on the side of caution when it comes to spice. The nights other entrée specials were the Chilean Sea Bass and the Roasted Duck.

After a delightful sherbet palate cleanser, the finale was offered. Two specialty desserts including a fried black and white crispy marble cheesecake in a filo dough dipped in cane sugar and served with caramel artfully designed on the plate which was excellent. It is a definite must for those sweet tooth's out there. The affogado, an Italian ice cream float with tiramisu espresso ice cream topped with homemade granola was also a delectable sweet to enjoy just a bite of, if you are watching your weight, or want others to continue to watch you.

A few other exciting offerings on their menu include, first, from their bar, a "Sole Bellini," a combination of fresh peach puree, champagne, a touch of Absolut, and triple sec which "packs quite a punch," according to the menu and several "stuzzichini", Italian finger foods including bruschetta and cicchetti. Io parlo un poco italiano, I don't know if any of you do, but it is a pleasure to try to practice, if only with the menu. Among the "piatto unico" (one plate meals), they offer a crab crusted, farm raised salmon with

Restaurant Sole

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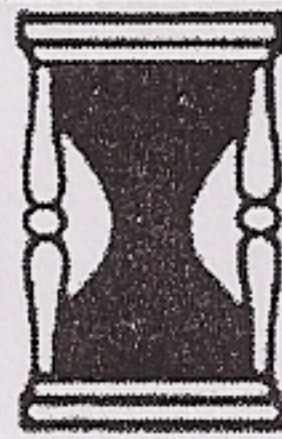
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lemon zest risotto, capellini vegetables and lobster broth and a traditional southern dish of sweet sausage and melted peppers and onions with red wine garlic bread. You may order shrimp, chicken, veal or eggplant parmigiana served with linguini in a light tomato sauce and may choose Prince Edward Island mussels with roasted garlic, scallions in a tomato broth or fried calamari from their antipasti menu. Several other insalatas include a carpaccio of sporresatta topped with arugula, Gorgonzola, roasted red peppers, candied almonds and "liquid gold" and a more traditional Caesar. Under their "Mama's Macaroni" heading, the Mezza Rigatoni strikes me, their version of vodka sauce but substituting Grappa for vodka, their favored alternative to the traditional sauce. Such creativity!

Mangia, Mangia!

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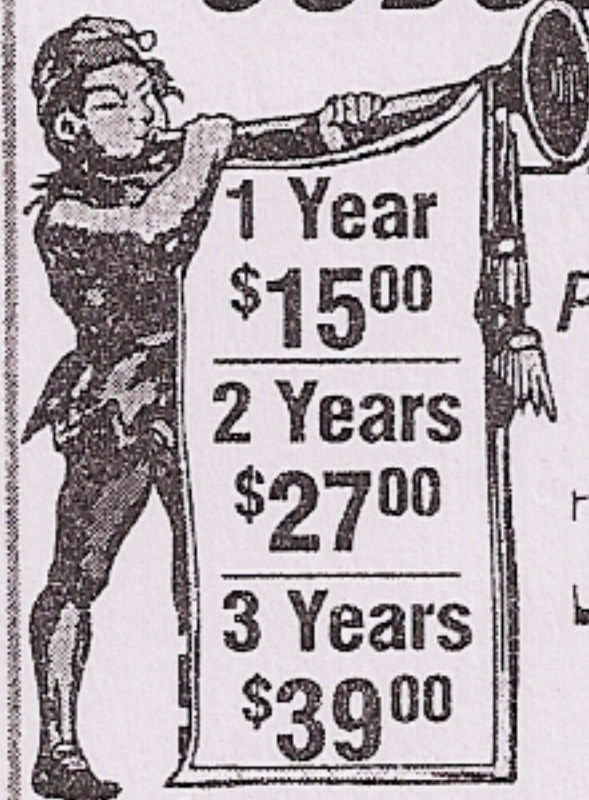
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