

THE GOURMAND SYNDROME

EAT LIKE YOU MEAN IT

Sunday, May 31, 2009

TIPICA

TIPICA, the latest project from the people who brought vibrancy -- and a cheese cave -- to downtown Salt Lake City is finally here after much anticipation. It was last summer when we first learned that Tony Caputo's Market and Deli was planning to transform its deli into a dinner spot by night; we've since enjoyed following the progress during weekly visits to stock up on an array of vices from the marketplace. We became Adam Kreisel fans during his stint as chef at Acme Burger Company, and the idea of combining his creativity with the forward-thinking vision of Caputo's is a recipe destined for greatness.

I've had a special place in my heart for Tony Caputo's Market and Deli ever since their meatball sandwich knocked me right off the vegetarian wagon I'd been riding on nearly a decade ago. The line, "I'm vegetarian with the exception of meatballs from Caputo's," quickly wore thin and the jig was up. Like some recovering vegetarians, my "born again" relationship with meat exists in a complex and admittedly compartmentalized zone I like to refer to as "denial." Carpaccio is a favorite, but sweetbreads were checked off my "life list" only by accident. That said, I have a deep appreciation for the "nose-to-tail" philosophy: if you are going to (insert euphemism) send an animal to swim with the fishes, at least show it the respect of utilizing as much of it as you can. Leave it to Kreisel and the pioneers at Caputo's to introduce this concept to Salt Lake City's still-growing dining community.



Amuse Bouche - Risotto Cakes with Meyer Lemon Marscapone and Micro Greens



Scallop Crudo, Shaved Fennel, Braised Kale, Lobster Vinaigrette - \$10

TIPICA'S web site lists this plate at \$12, but I am pretty sure the printed menu at the restaurant had it coming in at \$10, which seems more realistic. Raw scallops likely aren't for everyone, and Kreisel indicated that opinions have been pretty split on this one. I for one enjoyed their cool texture, nestled within the salad's Napoleon-esque presentation.



If all veggies were served like this J would never fall short of the food pyramid's daily recommendations. He thoroughly enjoyed the slightly charred intro, followed by the nuttiness of the cauliflower and finally, the sweet finish provided by the balsamic.



J reports that the meat was soft, moist and balanced in flavor: not overly pungent yet with a nice earthiness to it. The dish was, as he put it, "how lamb should be." He ventured to suggest its subtle flavor might pleasantly surprise those who typically steer clear of lamb.



A rather hearty dish and a culmination of so many of my favorite things. Kreisel hand makes the ravioli, which is evident in the thick folds of pasta. The fresh arugula helped to take the edge off the richness of the sage cream.

As for the dining room, mustard-toned curtains give TIPICA a willowy feel while concealing the soda machines, cash register and other evidence of the daytime deli. Unfortunately, the curtains also hide the kitchen from diners; the voyeurs in us had wanted to watch Kreisel et al at work.

TIPICA'S menu may be small, but it offers something for everyone: carnivores, omnivores, herbivores -- and those of us who reside somewhere in between. Favoring local, sustainable sources Kreisel intends to change things up frequently. It will be interesting to watch the selections evolve with the region's very distinct four seasons.

We were quite pleased with the restaurant's affordable wine list and *very* minimal wine markups...so much so that we ordered a bottle of Marques de Gelida cava (\$23) to enjoy in addition to the bottle of Châteauneuf-du-Pape we'd brought from home. With a food menu of nothing over \$20 and a wine list this approachable, TIPICA, like Caputo's Market and Deli, is in touch with what our community wants and needs. We look forward to its progression.

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Caputo