

Clint Eats



BY CLINT HAMBLIN

Winter Dining

When you think about winter dining, what's on your list? You might think of turkey, apples, varieties of squash and those earthy herbs we usually identify with Thanksgiving, but these four Boston restaurants define winter dining with duck, cod, scallops, soups, veal and lobster. All exceptional dishes served in exceptional restaurants.



Eastern Standard's lobster in pastry

The winter dining menu at Eastern Standard, located at 528 Commonwealth Avenue in Kenmore Square, includes Long Island duck breast served with barley, celery root and pomegranate. A tasty combination of flavors and textures, sliced rare duck is placed on top of a portion of nutty barley and sits in a spicy duck broth.

The crunchy panko-crusted cod was perfectly cooked, as was the Maine lobster in pastry, butter-poached lobster served with

house-made puff pastry, parsnips and shi-take in a Madeira cream sauce. Definitely outstanding!

The restaurant offers a full raw/shellfish bar, including Beachpoint oysters grown in West Barnstable. These mollusks are grown in baskets hanging on a clothesline 18 inches off the bottom of the bay floor. Plump and clean, Beachpoint oysters are beyond superb.

Metropolis Café, located at 584 Tremont Street, has been in the South End for 13 years, and chef de cuisine Robert Morotto's winter dining menu is loaded with colorful dishes, including a salad of young lettuces with port-soaked figs served with julienne celeriac, balsamic vinaigrette and slices of pecorino Romano. I couldn't get enough of this flavorful combination of ingredients.

The rope-grown mussels with garlic are outstanding, as is the gnocchi with duck confit served with Vermont Brussels sprouts, rosemary jus and Parmigiano-Reggiano. Save a piece of bread, you'll want to wipe the bowl clean.

The seared sea scallops with lemon fregola, golden corn with sweet pepper salsa and wild arugula is another example of Morotto's creativity. The scallops were clean and crunchy on the outside, and beautifully tender on the inside.

A most-outstanding dish was the Tuscan three-bean soup with tubettini, escarole, cold-pressed olive oil and Parmigiano-Reggiano. So colorful and so tasty, Morotto reminisces over his grandmother's recipe, "My father, my twin brother and I have been chefs throughout our lives, and we have not changed this recipe in nearly 50 years."

Located at 25 Charles Street, the Beacon Hill Bistro features the skills of executive chef Jason Bond, a talented man who keeps the winter dining menu interesting with innovative dishes like Macomber turnip and apple soup, calvados, duck confit and petit greens. The crunch of apple



Beacon Hill Bistro's scallops



Metropolis' mussels

and turnip along with the duck confit was a perfect combination of textures.

The house-cured gravlax with cucumber and yogurt salad is a year-round dish, but oh so refreshing before a wintry meal. Thinly sliced gravlax with fresh cucumber cleanses the palate before the hot and heavier dishes arrive.

The butter-poached Scituate lobster was served with tender littleneck clams, foraged mushrooms ragout and placed on spaghetti squash with pomegranate. The sweet and tender lobster combined with the squash and pomegranate seeds was a colorful and unusual combination of great flavors.

The seared scallops in lobster broth with fennel, leeks, bok choy and piment d'Espelette is another dish that could be served year-round. The scallops were beautiful to look at and perfectly prepared.

La Voile is located at 259 Newbury Street in the Back Bay, where chefs Christophe Santos and Raphael Lambert have elevated winter dining to a heavenly experience.

Simple dishes include home fish soup, pan-seared scallops with seasonal mushrooms and a delicious foie gras terrine. The classic French veal stew with basmati rice will knock your socks off. This is tender veal in a creamy sauce that would make Julia Child weep. Forget the doggy bag. It is impossible to leave your table without finishing every bit of this magnificent stew.

Served tableside, the grilled Mediterranean sea bass, "beurre blanc" is expertly deboned at the table and placed on your dish. The experience is entertaining, but the fish is "out of this world," especially with the creamy beurre blanc sauce. At another table, a roasted duck was deboned tableside.

Take my advice: La Voile belongs on your "must dine at" restaurant list.



Tableside service at La Voile



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