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by Bryan Sullivan

Wolfgang's Restaurant and Wine Bistro — a Hidden Gem in the Mountains

Nestled in the highest-incorporated town east of the Rocky Mountains, and in an area known as the “Land of the Waterfalls,” is a chef-owned restaurant that is well worth the visit.

Highlands, NC is home to several, fine-dining restaurants and Wolfgang's Restaurant and Wine Bistro tops the list.

Situated in an original Highlands home, dating back to the 1890s, the décor is warm and imaginative inspired by the mountain landscape; there are cozy fireplaces, and several intimate dining corners to choose from. In the warmer weather, outdoor dining is available.

A surprising amount of people were gathered in the wine bistro for an off-season, Saturday night. Tables were beautifully set with gold-colored plate chargers. The Wine Director explained their comprehensive wine list; staff is well trained and sent to California every year to study and learn more.

There are approximately 800 choices, and a commendable selection of wines offered by the glass, including a playful and sparkling Shiraz. For the past four years, Wolfgang's has been the recipient of *Wine Spectator's* “Best of Award of Excellence.”

The Chipolte corn chowder was the soup of the day and was lightened up for spring with chicken stock, instead of cream. The beef carpaccio was also a delightful starter. The plate was generously covered with thinly-shaved beef, drizzled with virgin olive oil, topped with shaved parmigiano cheese, and garnished with baby field greens and crostinis.

Freshly-made salads accompany every entrée and are topped with homemade dressings; specialty salads such as a walnut gorgonzola or Caesar are also available.

Wolfgang is known for his meat dishes and the grilled venison tenderloin wrapped in apple-smoked bacon served with a sun-dried cherry demi-glace was tribute to that. It was accompanied by wild rice and a wrapped bundle of spring vegetables. The venison — a perfect medium rare — was carefully sliced and fanned around the plate

The evening's special — the Commander's Palace Roast Duckling — was topped with a Grand Marnier Brandy sauce and had slow roasted for over eight hours. It was semi de-boned, crispy, and succulent.

The meal topped off with an apple strudel — a “family secret.” It was densely layered with apples, raisins and walnuts and served with freshly-whipped cream; it was unexpectedly akin to a bread pudding.

Chef Wolfgang lets the food and flavors speak for themselves; presentations are simple, yet elegant.

Wolfgang trained in Germany and his culinary experiences are as varied as his menu. One of his career highlights includes working as the Executive Chef for the Brennan Family at the Commander's Palace in New Orleans. He has received numerous awards and accolades and started Wolfgang's 14 years ago.

Wolfgang describes his cuisine as “eclectic American continental with New Orleans flair.

“We offer everything from caviar to collards,” he said.

If you go:

474 Main Street

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828-526-3807

Reservations are accepted

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