

Small Bites

Food Finds in the Lower Hudson Valley

This Week's Restaurant Review: Half Moon in Dobbs Ferry

Posted by: Liz Johnson - Posted in Restaurants, Reviews, dobbs ferry, half moon, ravi, review, suffern on Jul 07, 2008

We're going to try something new this week. The weekly restaurant write-up will move from The Line to the Wednesday section. This week we'll cover Half Moon in Dobbs Ferry.

But here's the cool part: I want to include your comments. Last week's review by the Blacks Ravi Continental Cuisine in Suffern got two pages of comments. I'd like to see some of those included when the review runs in print, too.

So here's the deal: Small Bites readers will get a sneak peek at the review. Add your comments below and my editors and I will select a few that represent what readers are saying and publish them alongside the "official" reviews. First up? Half Moon in Dobbs the waterfront restaurant everybody is talking about. Read on below and contribute your thoughts.

One disclaimer: What you say won't influence the write-up. It's already been through the editing process and is ready to print. On you go:



Judith Hausman For The Journal News

Half Moon occupies a stunning piece of real estate in Dobbs Ferry on the very edge of the Hudson with views of the hills across the river and the bridges north and south.

Small tables nestle into niches along a wall of windows in the large dining room, and outside there are benches and decks, mere steps from the river. An interior grand staircase, edged with waved-glass detailing, leads up to a loft space that multiplies the possibility of a view and is available for private events.

The menu is thoroughly revamped. The Fort Pond Bay Company, which also owns three restaurants in Montauk and Harvest-on-Hudson in nearby Hastings-on-Hudson, knows a thing or two about

menus for waterfront locations: lobster rolls and Ipswich clams, gazpacho with shrimp; cheddar and scallion croquettes to snack on with drinks; spectacular raw-bar "boats"; and a ceviche tasting, served in brightly colored glasses that reflect the setting sun.

And then there are formal entrées, followed by very large desserts to share by starlight. Corporate executive chef Vincent Barcelona describes Half Moon as "unexpected. We wanted to create something fun, whimsical, less dressy and more approachable," he adds. "People are flipping over it."

Principal owners Angelo Liberatore and Bruce Bernacchia are going for a Hamptons vibe and they use their Montauk resources to feature regional seafood, such as tilefish, trout and skate.

The self-described effort at local sourcing (how could it be Hudson Valley gazpacho before Hudson Valley cucumbers, peppers or tomatoes are available?) hasn't been achieved yet, but as the season goes on, more local produce will likely be included, maybe even from the landscaped beds around the restaurant. (They are planted with herbs and vegetables, which also remind diners of Harvest-on-Hudson.)

Even when weather forced us inside, Half Moon still gave us front-row seats for the thunderstorm rolling in and the sparkling aftermath.

Spicy crisp calamari tossed in a garlic-dressed salad made a great appetizer, and then my hungry companion dug into a traditional, thick prime rib.

Half Moon also features “a la plancha” cooking, thinly sliced and seared beef, lamb, chicken, halibut, shrimp and more, seared on a very hot, flat iron pan.

My skate a la plancha was delicate but too soft and too sauced to show off this simple cooking style. Roasted potatoes “brava” on a sweetish tomato-based sauce were oily, as was the roasted endive alongside. Lamb chops “juicy and flavorful” fared much better.

A Montauk Clam Bake with lobster, clams, sausage, mussels, corn, potatoes, chicken and shishito peppers would make an impressive share, but all in all, the small plates seem to be a better way to go at Half Moon, especially outside.

The duck tacos, for example, are shredded and served with avocado, and make for a nice nibble. Pork buns are sinfully satisfying. The croquettes, which are quite popular, are crispy on the outside and filled with gooey cheese and scallions on the inside.

And there's nothing like sitting by the water and dipping a warm fried Ipswich into a tartar sauce and dropping it into your mouth.

There's also a middle-of-the-road area of the menu. If you don't feel like sharing, but you're not quite in the mood for an entrée, try the clam po' boy or the lobster roll (rich and buttery).

Some of the dessert choices are standard, such as berries and whipped cream, cheesecake and bread pudding. We were tempted by a root-beer float (with two straws, please) and a \$16 ice-cream sandwich, imagining a luxurious adult version of our lunchroom favorite.

While strewing the ensemble with fresh fruit was a cute idea, the creation turned out to be a napoleon: that is, crackly pastry sheets, layered with ice cream and whipped cream.

Still, for most of the menu, what you see is what you get. Barcelona and executive chef Sal Sprufero offer choices that are just right for this location, and they have made sure the setting isn't the only reason to visit.

Half Moon
1 High St., Dobbs Ferry
914-693-4130

Cuisine: New American

Price: Entrées \$20 to \$30, small plates less

Hours: Dinner nightly

In brief: The owners of Harvest-on-Hudson have turned the former Chart House restaurant into an American brasserie with a flexible menu and a fun vibe. Try duck tacos, Montauk calamari salad, and ceviche, or go for the plancha section with a mixed grill and meats like veal Porterhouse. The décor is funky and casual with bamboo wood floors, and outdoor seating on the patios, raw bar, lots of glass and two patios with tiki bars. The restaurant also offers stunning views of the Palisades, the George Washington and Tappan Zee bridges and the Manhattan skyline.

Features: Waterfront dining, views, singles appeal, seasonal cuisine, late-night eats, small plates, dine at the bar, meet for a drink, jeans OK, vegetarian friendly, romantic, private room, open Mondays

What we liked: Spicy calamari salad, lamb chops, prime rib, cheddar and scallion croquettes, lobster roll, ceviche, Ipswich clams

Editor's Pick