

## IN THE SUBURBS

# Stickler for detail delivers wonderful din

Tapenade Bistro provides local fare with surprising twists

BY MICHELLE HOPKINS

Many restaurants talk about consistency — consistency in service, atmosphere and food.

Not all can live up to that claim. However, Tapenade Bistro in Steveston delivers every time. I've been for brunch, lunch and dinner and it never fails to delight my senses.

Its owner, Vince Morlet, is simply a stickler for detail. He always finds ways to surprise his loyal clientele. Time after time, the local restaurateur offers the best local fare with little twists on favourites — such as the Caesar salad with crab or the carpaccio with bison instead of beef — all the while never skimping on stellar service and a great wine collection.

The atmosphere is very "upscale trendy casual" with a touch of class.

The ambience here is timeless, the service is old school, and this staff knows the menu.

A few months ago, Tapenade Bistro introduced a new executive chef, Ryan Zuvich. Most recently, he held executive chef positions at Vancouver's well-known Bin 942 and Plan B Lounge & Eatery.

When I asked Zuvich his philosophy, the young, rising culinary star said he prides himself on everything being homemade and describes his cooking as "simple, not complicated, with fresh, quality ingredients — clean food with taste."

My partner and I recently visited the urban chic eatery and sat down to a new carte du jour created by Zuvich, with Morlet's blessing.

However, knowing that he couldn't remove some of the signature dishes the clientele craved, Zuvich compromised by infusing his own stamp on them. Tapenade's fuses the best of the west coast with a hint of French influence.

We started out with a couple of to-die-for appetizers.

The smoked salmon ravioli with basil goat cheese cream simply melted in my mouth. Of course, I had to partake of my partner's bison carpaccio with pickled beech mushrooms, arugula, Parmigiano reggiano and drizzled with lemon olive oil — delicious!

Then it was on to our main courses. I



chose the local albacore tuna (\$25) seared rare and served on a bed of olive-crushed potatoes, haricots vert and a sauce vierge. My partner went for the restaurant's signature beef short rib (\$27), a braised Alberta AAA boneless short rib with Yukon gold pomme purée, pearl onions and Paris mushrooms in a red wine sauce.

For wine connoisseurs, the selection will not disappoint. There are more than 100 to choose from, with a strong focus on B.C.'s finest, California and France.

A bold bottle of Orofino Bridge Red from the Similkameen Valley rounded out our culinary adventure beautifully. From past visits, Morlet knew exactly what would please my wine palate and this bold red fit the bill superbly.

Our waitress, Tina Mercedes, who has

been with Morlet for a number of years now, is always professional, unobtrusive, warm and knowledgeable. She has won local newspaper awards as best server several years in a row.

I don't normally eat dessert, but at Morlet's suggestion we shared a rice pudding with braised mission fig. It was creamy and tasty without being heavy.

If I sound like a true fan, you're right, I am. But ask anyone in Steveston or Richmond and they will tell you the same thing — the food, service and ambience are consistently wonderful. It's that simple.

The restaurant seats 72 inside and during the summer the heated patio can hold 70. Reservations are recommended.

*Special to The Sun*

## Tapenade Bistro

3711 Bayview St.

Richmond

Reservations: 604-275

[www.tapenade.ca](http://www.tapenade.ca)