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"Playing" with Food at Tasting Room

17 September 2008

This was my third time wining and dining at Tasting Room, Jalan Bangkung. Every visit never fails to tantalise my taste buds and bring it soaring to the skies. The food is great and the wine selection fantastic.

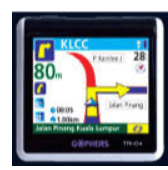
Check out the list of goodies on our customised menu that night:



HOTEL CaPITOL
BUKIT BINTANG KUALA LUMPUR

RM 188++

superior room
+ sahur / breakfast





Sounds scrumptious, right? Since the menu has already been specially chosen based on our preferences, we decided to sit and relax at our cosy corner enjoying the soothing sounds of jazz that transitioned to a string of golden oldies as the night wore on. Clueless on which wine to order, I stuck to the very safe latte (you can't go wrong with that!). So I sipped my delicious latte, nibbled on the nachos while waiting for the food to be served and noted that the place was filled with people.

A full house on week night says a lot about the establishment. Clearly Tasting Room is not a well-kept secret despite it being tucked discretely one floor above Wine Cellar. All this means that booking is advisable before making your way there.



Nachos with an interesting cucumber mix dip



Comfort dining is the key word here



Latte with brown sugar cubes

Flights of Fancy

Their concept of cuisine and wine tasting flights is pretty cool. Tasting flight is a term used by wine tasters to denote a selection of wines (anything between three to five at Tasting Room, and to as many as fifty generally speaking), chosen for the purpose of sampling and comparison. That night we were presented with two 'flight' cuisine and one wine flight. The objective was to savour, appreciate and experiment sample size portions of different varieties – basically have an exciting time with our food and drinks.

Our wine flight came with an explanation sheet providing the background on each wine. Vintage Travel is the name and wine pairing is the game. The gracious Tasting Room hosts suggested some excellent pairings with a mouth-watering selection of contemporary European cuisine. Of course there is the very generic rule of thumb - **white with seafood, chicken or duck; and red with meat**. But different people have different palates. The wine flight enabled us to experiment the food served with each of the wines.



The Vintage Travel Wine Flight

I Fell in Love with Spanish Cava

Aru, the friendly Tasting Room waiter recommended this amazing **Spanish Cava** sparkling wine to me. It's basically Spanish champagne which tasted rich, citrusy and with a hint of bubbiness. It's perfect on its own and pairs well with the duck, non-tomato based pasta, fish and also desserts. So if you are stumped as to which wine to order for what dish, you can always call upon the waiting staff and ask for recommendations. These people really know their stuff.



Spanish Cava

For now, let's get started on to the appetisers. The dishes appeared in pairs, as dictated by the menu arrangements.

Appetisers

First we had the **Roast Duck with Rock Melon**. It looked mainly oriental, tasted oriental but the salad on the side gave it a continental flair. The duck was quite moist and the sweet sauce marinated into skin well. The **Gunderloch Riesling Kabinet** which has a rich texture and subtle hints of pineapple, nectarine and apricot went very well with the duck. So did my Spanish Cava.



Roast Duck with Rock Melon

Next we had the **Baby Octopus in White Wine with Water Chestnut**. Just like the Roast Duck before, some of the cuisines have an exotic twist to them thanks to some nifty oriental and eastern ingredients expertly added by the Sarawakian chef. The man was a genius in whipping out the most delicious, crunchy, juicy, tangy, garlicky water chestnuts I've ever tasted! And coming from someone who's not big on water chestnuts, that's saying a lot. The garlicky water chestnuts and the white wines on our Travel Vintage Flight were great together.

The squid was alright – you can tell that I'm not a squid person. Unfortunately, Chief Eater (my fellow reviewer) bit into a grain of sand embedded in the baby octopus which threw a small spanner in the works. Ouch.



The divine water chestnuts

Mains - Pasta

However, he was quickly appeased by the appearance of our next dish – the **Pasta Duo** which is actually Green Tea Soba and Squid Ink Fettucine prepared with an olio-like sauce of garlick and herbs. Large yummy scallops adorned the pasta. This tasty, herby and light dish made a tantalising match for the **Gunderloch Riesling** and **Spanish Cava**.



Pasta Duo

Next came the **Sun Dried Tomatoes with Lamb**. At first glance, the spaghetti looked swathed with tomatoes and meat balls. On closer inspection, the 'meat balls' were actually succulent whole lamb pieces – not minced at all. Those who like their pasta almost drowning with the sauce should enjoy this. For me, the lamb took centre stage. I tried it with the **Hermanos Lurton Tempranillo**, a medium-bodied red with adequate acidity and vanilla, and it was a good match.



Sun Dried Tomatoes with Lamb

Mains – Beef & Fish Flights

This has got to be the highlight of the night. Imagine three different ways of cooking a type of meat – all of them out of this world – and you get to taste them all. What could be more divine?

The juicy and tender **Australian Premium Angus Beef Flight** came pan-fried, oven-baked and seared. One had the luscious foie gras on the top – after tasting that combination, I cannot imagine a better topping for the amazing steak. All of them were prepared medium-rare, which is the best way to eat beef. Anything more and the steak will become tough and rubbery. The lavishness of this beef flight made a nice match for the full-flavoured, smooth, crisp and velvety **Hermanos Lurton Tempranillo**.



Australian Premium Angus Beef Flight

Not to be outdone, the Pacific Cod Fish Flight further tantalised our palate with its pan fried, oven-baked and seared offerings. The pieces of fish were so succulent and fresh and the sauces brought out the best in them. The dish worked very well with the well-balanced and buttery **Les Janelles Chardonnay**, **Gunderloch Riesling Kabinett** and of course, the **Spanish Cava**.



Pacific Cod Fish Flight

Sweet Strange Surprise

One of the extra surprises outside the menu was the very exotic sounding Lamb and Aubergine in Chocolate Sauce. Now, Tasting Room is one of the few places that offers the best beef and lamb steaks in town. True to form, the lamb was succulent and tender while the aubergine (egg plant) and French

beans were nicely done not overcooked. However, combined with the chocolate sauce it just tasted... strange. An acquired taste perhaps. Seeing that it was almost dessert –like, covered in chocolate and all, I tried it with the **Spanish Cava**. Not a bad combination.



Lamb and Aubergine in Chocolate Sauce

Regina, one of our hosts for the night introduced us to her all-time favourite snack – **Fries with Wasabi Dip**. The dip was tangy and flavourful, and tasted great with the juicy fries. It was hard to just stop at one, or three or even seven. It was very, very addictive.



Fries with Wasabi Dip

To cap it off, we had **Chocolate Fondant** as our dessert. The crispy outer chocolate cake shell combined with the hot melted chocolate oozing out and the coldness of the Movenpick vanilla ice cream thoroughly satiated our senses. The **Spanish Cava** was the ideal wine to pair with this decadently sweet dessert.



Chocolate Fondant

Conclusion:

If there's anything I've learned from that dinner, it's this: a good wine, paired wisely with a delectable cuisine will make the dish memorable and fantastic. Here's a list of our personal favourites:

Favourite Dish

Chief Eater and I agree that it's a tie between the Beef and Cod Fish Flight. Both are fantastically out of this world that it's hard to choose between them.

Favourite Wine

Chief Eater couldn't get enough of the Gunderloch Riesling Kabinett while I totally dig the Spanish Cava.

Stay tuned for more foodie adventures!

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