

REVIEW

CAFÉ MOZART, 60 CAMERON STREET, WHANGAREI

With Mr Ed protesting about "missing the rugby", the Spy Team headed into the Mall to meet Eric the Viking and Femme Fatale for a taste of apparently Swiss cuisine.



There was fresh paint on the outside and a smattering of diners inside on this Saturday night. As Eric quaffed a 9% alcohol beer and Femme Fatale, dressed to kill, ripped into a banana daiquiri we assessed the rather unusual surroundings.

Café Mozart used to be Rowe's Pharmacy; its RP logo is still above the interior door and there are chanel (sic) signed glassed panels over the bar. Wood floors, wood tables, wood chairs and wood panels the décor is predominantly ...wooden! Pharmacy-type memorabilia abounds in old wood-and-glass cabinets along the walls – an eclectic collection indeed, including a very strange puppet hanging from the ceiling. Weird! The piano next to the bar didn't get a workout while we were there, but we are told Mein Host (Mr Mozart?) does crank it up from time to time.

The attempt at a festive atmosphere created by coloured lights and tinsel around the bar (the old pharmacy counter!) left us wondering if Christmas had arrived a little too early this year.

Clocks are everywhere, though none of them was working, and the music was from a commercial radio station, regrettably one that offers twelve minutes an hour of ad breaks!

As Mr Ed rejoiced in trainspotting an abundance of spelling mistakes on the menu, we ordered a bottle of **Waimea Chardonnay (\$36.50)**. Very pleasant.

Café Mozart offers 8 New Zealand and 11 Imported Beers; 4 Bubbles (from \$7.50 for a glass of the ubiquitous Lindauer up to \$125 for a 750ml bottle of Laurent Perrier). There are 11 White Wines (\$19.50-\$36.50) and 11 reds (\$19.50-\$78). Apparently a glass of House wine is \$6.20 (printed menu price) but \$6.00 according to the blackboard menu!

CHOSEN ENTRÉES:

We started with a serving of **Garlic Bread (\$6.50)**, 1 spicy and 1 mild; light and fluffy pizza-style breads with a decent sprinkling of herbs, cheese and zucchini strips. Very tasty.



This unusual name of **Swiss Sausage Soup** intrigued us enough to try it; consensus was that it was a good choice. A chunky hotpot style with frankfurter-type sausage and chunks of carrot, peas, celery and tomato. Hot and tasty.

CHOSEN MAINS:

Sliced Pork Eye Fillet on a Chardonnay Sauce with Fettuccine Pasta (\$22.50). The pork was served in thin slices in the sauce with sliced mushrooms, slices of zucchini, and the fettuccine pasta on the side. A generous meal but unfortunately way too salty for the delicate tastebuds of Mr Ed.

Sirloin Steak, Mushrooms and Italian Sauce (\$19.80). A large steak, requested "medium-well done" but served more like medium-rare.

Femme Fatale could not manage to chew her way through all of this and being still on the med-rare side was not quite to her taste anyway. Served with a tomato sauce on one half and mushroom sauce on the other.

Hunter Style Venison (sic) Stew served with Mashed Potatoes (\$24.50).

Definitely a dish for the hearty eater, but easily dealt with by the voracious Blonde Spy, (who had clearly been denied breakfast and lunch). A large bowl of stew with the mashed tatoes in a separate dish. Accompanied by warm grapes and chunks of bacon, this dish too was quite salty. But the venison was suitably tender, typical of a braised stew.

Rack of Lamb with Rosemary Garlic Sauce served with Gourmet Potatoes (\$30.50).

Stacked up with sliced and grilled eggplant. The lamb was very tender and just off-pink. Very tasty and pronounced 'perfect' by Eric the Viking, perhaps influenced by the number of 9% beers he had consumed in the interim!

CHOSEN DESSERTS:

Swiss Seasonal Fruit Pie (\$7.20). A thick wedge of short pastry with thin slices of fruit, much like a flan. Nothing special.

Maple Syrup Caramelised Lady Finger Bananas with Tia Maria (\$8.50). Maple syrup and banana are a match made in heaven, the Tia Maria was there too.

Forest Berry Sundae, Vanilla and Banana Berry Ice-cream with Hot Berries (\$7.40). Now I didn't know bananas came in berry form but this was a yummy dessert. A hot berry compôte that we all fought over.

Fresh Fruit Salad with Fresh Cream (\$6.80). A selection of fruit with cream. Dull 'n' boring.

Café Mozart supplied an OK meal at a reasonable price (\$58 a head, including drinks). We certainly couldn't say the servings here were ungenerous, but things didn't really gel on the night. Is Café Mozart stuck in a time warp, as indicated by the olde worlde trimmings?

The service, style and presentation of cuisine were all just a little too tame and tired to be considered either memorable or contemporary. We got that 'they're just going through the motions' feeling.

Perhaps a megadose of multivitamins, and The Magic Flute on CD would help crank old Mozart into the new millennium. ■

scene
magazine
rating **6 1/2**
OUT OF 10
food quality, value, service, ambience, decor

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