

EXTRACT FROM "THE MERCURY" 26TH MARCH 2010

A menu to drool over

Food

ANNIE STEVENS



IT MAY sound like a hackneyed principle, but continuity is a vital ingredient in any commercial kitchen. And it's not really fair to descend on a new chef just days after a takeover to check his or her worth.

So we gave Guy Gorrie time to settle in his new position at Hotel Izulu in Ballito after the departure of Floris Smith, who has returned to Bushmanskloof in the Cederberg.

Guy worked under Floris, so he's not a newcomer to the hotel (which also has a new general manager, but the same owners).

And it's satisfying to note that although the change-about was not necessarily seamless, the food served to us last week was just as good as that his predecessor produced.

Mind you, sitting under an umbrella by the pool heightens any lunchtime pleasure, as does a bottle of Springfield Life from Stone. But I've seldom seen a menu as tempting as Gigi's at Izulu. And it's made even more interesting by the fact that most items – including lunch dishes – are served in two sizes, as starters or mains.

Which means you get to try more for your money.

So, working from the most interesting of the items we sampled, to the least, here goes...

A clear duck and mushroom soup was so full of flavour we wished we'd had a big portion. I'm not sure the accompanying coriander pesto crouton contributed anything towards the whole, but this was a very adult version of chicken soup for the soul.

Norwegian salmon with spinach and champagne sauce, lightly and brightly handled, is also worth a whirl. But then it really is hard to mess up salmon.

Duck sausages served with mashed potato and wilted greens were tasty, but on the dry side – they needed some gravy. Or, as the kitchen would put it, a duck jus.

Mango pickled prawns

Given that, I would try them again, along with a garlic prawn confit (a much-abused term) on Asian noodles with caper butter.



GUY CORRIE EXECUTIVE CHEF

On the lunch menu are interesting items like mango pickled prawns with greens, preserved lemon custard and sesame roti; cured Norwegian salmon with gorgonzola soufflé and Waldorf salad; and butternut and miso soup with basil croutons.

More substantial are duck leg confit on vanilla and lemon potato purée; a choice of chicken, lamb or duck curries; rack of lamb with wholegrain mustard, potato and rocket salad; and beef fillet with chouriço mash and red onion marmalade.

For the less hungry there are such things as a gourmet burger and a grilled haloumi open sandwich.

Briefly considering a liquorice ice cream sandwich, which sounded bizarre, we finished with an exemplary vanilla crème brûlée, a selection of frozen yoghurts and a nicely tart lemon tart with an interesting accompaniment of glazed berries on rocket.

****** It was one of the better meals I've had this year. ******

Prices: Starter portions R42 to R80, main courses R55 to R140.

Ambience: Lunch by the pool if the weather is good, or dine in the restrained, elegant Gigi's.

WITH COMPLIMENTS OF

RESERVATIONS: 032 946 3444