

RESTAURANTreview

by Jeanne Muchnick



RIGHT: The mustard-crusting Cornish hen roasted “under a brick” is a speciality of the house. **ABOVE:** The restaurant’s interior.



A Touch of Bologna

Grappolo Locanda is a taste of Italy in Chappaqua.

The streets of Chappaqua are usually quiet after 6 p.m. on a cold winter night—that is, until you stop in front of Grappolo Locanda, where from the sidewalk you can almost hear the tinkling of silverware and the din of conversation. Laid-back enough for jeans yet refined to make you feel as if you’re dining someplace special, this trattoria reminds me of Lusardi’s in Larchmont—especially given the friendly neighborhood vibe. Lots of patrons seem to know each other—or at least, they appear to be on a first-name basis with owner Tom Cuomo, who greets them at the door.

When I visited on a recent Wednesday night, a couple at a nearby table invited Cuomo to sit down and share a glass of red (which they’d brought in). The young owner replied, “I’d love to,” despite the fact that his restaurant was hopping. I couldn’t help but wonder when he’d offer us an equally warm welcome, but all we received was a perfunctory, “Is this your

first time here?” before he rushed off to meet another set of guests.

My unpopular status aside, I was sold on the food the minute I took a bite of the *gamberoni al gorgonzola* (jumbo shrimp sautéed in cheese and brandy). Though Chef Carmelo D’Aprile manages to infuse hints of his native Bologna into every dish, you shouldn’t come here expecting simple spaghetti. The menu reads more like an exercise in creative contemplation, and I sipped my glass of velvety Brunello Di Montalcino wine while savoring the earthy aroma of my *galletto al mattone* entrée, a mustard-crusting Cornish hen roasted “under a brick.”

Once my husband finished his tender lamb, we fortified ourselves for the trip home by indulging in dessert. Here, the list once again offered sophisticated versions of Italian favorites. I opted for the ricotta cheesecake spiced with orange zest, while my husband washed down his *fagottino di cioccolato*, a phyllo-wrapped chocolate

bundle, with a rich decaf cappuccino. Stepping back into the bitter night we resolved to return—hoping that next time we’ll have moved up the status notch to be greeted a bit more warmly! ♣

grappolo locanda

76 King Street
Chappaqua
238-5950; grappololocanda.com



Dinner for two: \$120, excluding tax, tip, and drinks.

Hours: Mon.–Sat. 11:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m., 5–11 p.m.; closed Sundays.

Good to know: This eatery isn’t great only in winter. You can dine alfresco at charming sidewalk tables as soon as it gets warm.

☹ = Poor ☺ = OK ☺☺ = Good ☺☺☺ = Great ☺☺☺☺ = Wow!

Whole Foods

Everything's organic at this Hastings newcomer.

I didn't know what to expect when I walked into Bloom, the new organic restaurant in Hastings-on-Hudson. I love eating healthy, but I wondered how bold I'd have to be for some of the more-exotic fare, like grilled bison rib eye and biodynamic wine (made organically while taking into account phases of the moon, planetary positions, and other complicated cosmic elements I'm still trying to figure out). Turns out, the food was tasty—bison rib eye tastes just like regular steak; the wine was only a bit more tart than my usual Pinot Noir—and the vibe was pleasantly laid-back. My only question is: Will the rest of Westchester be so open?

After all, \$36 is a bit steep for what essentially tastes like a New York strip, although

you will feel good knowing you're consuming fresh, pesticide-free fare. (Even the cooking water is filtered!) The menu changes frequently, depending on what's seasonally available, which means some nights you might find more fish than meat, and on others there could be a variety of pastas. The good news is, you'll always have interesting dishes to choose from. Plus, the coffee and desserts are so exceptional, it's worth stopping in for that course alone. Each java order is served in an individual French press. (And my cup was so rich I twice had to ask Aaron, my waiter, if he was sure it was decaf!) The teas are loose and organic (of course), and you can choose from an assortment of soy milk, organic milk, or goat's milk (though

The bison rib eye, with garlic mashed potatoes, tastes just like regular steak.



The warm interior sets a calming tone.

disappointingly, low-fat milk was not available). However, my girlfriend and I were happy to linger over our chocolate trio—a flourless chocolate cake, a scoop of chocolate ice cream, and a pot of creamy mousse.

Though the restaurant has only been open a few months, there's a buzz to this place. In fact, I plan to return one Friday night when Alyssa Cooper, the owner's wife, sings folk and soul. There are also plans for piano music for Sunday brunch. So, Westchester, I ask once more, are you ready for the imaginative offerings of this eco-friendly eatery? There's only one way to find out... ♣

bloom

19 Main Street
Hastings-on-Hudson
478-3250; bloom-restaurant.com



Dinner for two: \$100, excluding tax, tip, and drinks.

Hours: Mon.–Thurs. 6–10 p.m.;
Fri.–Sat. 6–11 p.m.; Sun. brunch 11
a.m.–3 p.m., dinner 5–9 p.m.

Good to know: Live music is
offered Friday nights 9–11 p.m., and
on Sunday 11 a.m.–3 p.m. (call first).
There is no cover charge.

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