

A Notable new space

Celebrated chef's long-awaited restaurant doesn't disappoint
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It's Friday and we've decided to treat ourselves to a long-awaited meal at NOtable, chef Michael Noble's new restaurant. In the works for the past year or so, the new hot spot from the renowned chef promises to deliver "gourmet comfort," and I'm pleased to report that the food, space and service all live up to that promise.

The first notable aspect of the restaurant (pardon the pun) is the location. Situated across from a strip mall on Bowness Road in the city's northwest. Noble proves that if you build it, they will come. They do come, in droves. The place is packed when we arrive at 8 p.m.

Deciding from the onset that a computerized reservation system just wasn't its style, NOtable takes reservations for only half of its 132 spots. The other half of the restaurant is open to drop-ins or those calling ahead for a spot on the waiting list.

We call ahead and end up waiting about 30 minutes for our table. But we don't go unnoticed by the manager and are served complimentary cocktails while we wait. Nice touch.

And the wait works in our favour — it gives us a chance to admire the details put into the space and kitchen. I love the room. It features the right amount of high-end finishes mixed with charming rustic touches like chicken wire, a cut log wall, plus an expansive open kitchen complete with a wood-fired grill. The look is a perfect accompaniment to the food and philosophy behind it.

Once seated, we dig into the mouth-watering menu selections. Our server lets us know that the kitchen is sold out of the evening's rotisserie feature, prime rib (the feature changes throughout the week), and the chef's market tasting. Bummer. Fortunately, there's plenty to choose from on this stellar menu and our server offers good suggestions.

One thing I immediately notice on the drink menu is the water. Normally, I don't give the time of day to water on a drink menu, but in this case I like NOtaBLE's concept. For one dollar, NOtaBLE serves water that goes through a four-stage filtration system. What makes it appealing is that each month's net proceeds of NOtaBLE water sales are donated to a well-deserving charity. I can definitely get behind that.

Moving onto the food, we decide to start with a baby spinach salad with pickled strawberries, speck (a type of smoked ham) and Sylvan Star Gouda (\$11), and the grilled flatbread with whole roasted garlic (\$5).

Both are delectable. The fresh spinach salad is packed with flavour — from the tart tang of the pickled strawberries to the smoky speck, to the always amazing Sylvan Star Gouda. The wood-fired flat bread is a nice addition to the mix. Grilled to perfection, the roasted garlic spreads beautifully on the house-made bread.

For his main, my boyfriend gets the rotisserie half-chicken (\$22). Packed with juicy, buttery flavour, this item is literally finger-licking good. Topping it off are NOtaBLE's tasty, medium-cut house-made fries. Grade A, my friends.

Based on our server's recommendation, I go with the wild B.C. halibut with panang curry sauce (\$27). Wow. It's a remarkable dish featuring beautiful, fresh halibut and a perfectly piquant sauce. The dish balances well with the accompanying fingerling potatoes and fresh beans. It's one of the best seafood dishes I've ever had in Calgary. I'm smitten.

Topping off this lovely experience we order Noble's signature recipe, the Stilton cheesecake (\$9). For those who don't know, Stilton is a blue cheese from England. Noble's use of the blue cheese in the cheesecake is fantastic — it's subtle, but noticeable enough to make a favourable impression. I also love that it's bruléed, adding a crisp caramelization. Paired with a rhubarb compote, the cheesecake dishes up just the right amount of sweet and tart. Swoon.

NOtaBLE is a spot for everyone. Foodies will love the mentality behind the food and neighbourhood folks will love the addition to the community. I like just about everything about it. The service is friendly and approachable (the servers wear T-shirts), the space is appropriate to its concept and the food is, well, drool-worthy. There's true value here Calgary. Now go.