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the steele fork: fork's fabulous french find

by jarrett steele

Editor's Note: This month's Steele Fork column provides a much-needed ladies' perspective; the Fork's frequent "dining companion" finally speaks up, to offer her discerning taste and commentary on a visit to a rather un-Forklike establishment. Read on ...

mentary on a visit to a rather un-Forklike establishment. Read on ...

WE VENTURED TO THE SOUTH OF FRANCE ON A TUESDAY NIGHT. In reality, it was more like south of the Bush Turnpike, but passing through a charming café patio to enter Lavendou, we quickly forgot its address and immersed ourselves in the rustic country bistro.

The Fork had initially been skeptical about taking his usual dining companion on this assignment but appreciated the restaurant host's cheery welcome – he even beat the Fork to helping me into my chair when we were seated. Our table was in a warmly decorated main dining room of weathered brick, light terra cotta tiles and dark wood; a small dried lavender plant and candle adorned our tabletop. That we were seated around several other couples on dates, lights dimmed, added to the cozy and romantic setting.

My first taste of Lavendou's was the soup du jour (\$5), a cream of spinach that had a soft, subtle flavor and consistency. His lobster bisque (\$7) was equally as good, with a richness that was complemented by a slight tomato twang. I could thankfully see the Fork resisting the male urge to sop up the very last of it with the one of the freshly baked baguette slices that had the perfect mix of crustiness and doughy softness.

Our cool, refreshing glasses of Georges Duboeuf Macon Villages chardonnay (\$8) were also very enjoyable, although Lavendou offers a number of other affordable wines from Provence and South France, both by the glass or bottle.

Appetizers (around \$9) ranged from escargots a la Bourguignonne and steamed mussels with white wine and saffron, to foie gras terrine. We selected a mixed wild mushroom appetizer that was served in a meaty, delicious sauce with a flaky pastry.

I was shocked to see the Fork pass over selections such as the grilled ribeye with merlot butter or beef tenderloin with cracked black pepper, mushrooms and cream sauce (\$25 each) in favor of

the featured "les poissons" of the sea.

A taste of his lightly crusted sauteed sea bass with champagne sauce (\$24) melted in my mouth with a slightly buttery flavor, accompanied by small but meaty crab claws and crisp, fresh green beans, zucchini, carrots and other vegetables.

My leek-stuffed chicken breast (\$20) was baked just right, savory juices complemented by a mildly zesty crayfish sauce and shrimp. The small roasted potato that accompanied it was worth every carbohydrate-laden bite.

While we chose our entrees from that evening's "Aujourd'hui" special menu, Lavendou's dinner menu offered other very tempting choices, including pork tenderloin with lavender honey and red currants (\$20), roast duck in a berry cassis sauce (\$22) and traditional Provencal beef stew with boiled potatoes (\$19).

The sadness of not being able to culminate our weeknight escape with a crème brulee subsided quickly, as the house dessert was something special. "Le Choix De Souffle" (\$7.50) was a made-for-two chocolate soufflé (also available in raspberry or Grand Marnier) that was light as a feather, with a potent cocoa sauce and sweet whipped cream.

The bistro was surprisingly over half full on our Tuesday evening visit, which may have been why our waiter didn't chat much, or come around often. Though the support staff was constantly present to clear our plates and refill glasses (yet not looming over us), we would have preferred our server have been more attentive. We did enjoy the time we had to ourselves to relax and enjoy a splendid meal, in this little southern corner of France, south of Frisco.


In addition to serving dinner and lunch, Lavendou also offers French High Tea on weekdays, as well as spices, tarts and other delectables to take home from its boutique shop.


Lavendou


19009 Preston Rd.
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Dinner, Lunch &
High Tea (reservations recommended)

V, MC, AmEx,
Disc, DC

Food 

Service 

Atmosphere 

Value 

(scale of five forks)



Jarrett Steele is a writer living on the verge of Frisco. When his fork isn't busy sampling new and interesting restaurants in town, you'll find him kicking back and grilling out.