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We are pleased to welcome our guest reviewer, Lee Ratliff and thank him for his contribution to the Holiday issue of Frisco STYLE Magazine. Our own Jarrett Steele is off celebrating with his family the arrival of his first child. Congratulations to the Steeles and we look forward to the Fork returning soon.

HAVING HAD HUNDREDS OF LONELY DINNERS IN HOTEL RESTAURANTS

around the country as part of my frequent business travel, I was a little apprehensive as my date and I approached the Legacy Grill in the Westin Stonebriar Resort. Even the best hotels often have marginal restaurants, seemingly content to provide top-notch lodging while the cuisine is an afterthought. Or worse, it's designed for universal (bland) taste and room-service delivery while costing a fortune. Therefore, when at home, I usually steer clear of these havens of overpriced and mediocre fare.

I'm happy to report that Legacy Grill is one of the few exceptions to the rule. A bit expensive, yes, but the food and service make this one of the best bets in Frisco for a special meal, especially now that the holidays are on top of us and we often seek to splurge for family and friends.

Chef Wiley Bates, former executive chef of the Landmark restaurant in Dallas' Melrose Hotel, oversees the kitchen as they serve up sumptuous helpings of beef, chicken, pork, and seafood accompanied by a host of imaginative and delicious side dishes. The menu is seasonal and the chef will be changing it in early December.

Legacy Grill is elegant, decorated in what might be described as 'cowboy chic.' Tasteful western art decorates the walls, while wood paneling, chandeliers and stained glass give an upscale feel. Tables and booths are comfortable and widely separated, which is good because on the night we were there – a Thursday – few tables were occupied and it was quiet enough for conversations

to carry. Casually clad patrons were not out of place among more formally attired business types and dining couples.

Soon after we were seated, a basket of delicious sunflower and poppy seed bread was delivered, accompanied by an olive tapenade. I often think a restaurant can be judged by the quality of bread they serve and I was happy to have my expectations met on this point. The nutty flavor of the bread was nicely complimented by the saltiness of the tapenade, but frankly, the bread stood better alone.

We started with an appetizer of wild mushroom beignets (\$7). These deep-fried spheres of fungal goodness (think small mushroom hushpuppies) were delicious dipped in creamy Brie cheese sauce. My date, not usually a fan of mushrooms, was surprisingly complimentary. Next time we might try the Legacy Lobster Shooter (\$11), served in a martini glass with a shot of tequila-lime consommé, gazpacho and a blue corn tortilla crisp.

Next came my house salad (\$6), a respectable mix of greens, cherry tomatoes, onions and radish topped with Green Goddess dressing. My date had the baby romaine salad (\$8), featuring a fantastic presentation of the romaine with sliced avocado and tomato and a touch of tasty roasted pepper tapenade.

For the entrée, I opted for one of the specials – pecan crusted tilapia fillets with mushroom risotto (\$26). The fish was cooked perfectly, moist and flaky, but the pecan crust was begging for a sauce, even if it was only a wedge of lemon for squeezing. The risotto was extremely flavorful, though just a touch thin and overcooked. This dish was the only disappointment of the evening, falling just short of expectations.

My companion chose an entrée from the menu - grilled black tiger shrimp with a hash of lump crab, asparagus and potato



Red Velvet Cake at Legacy Grill

photo by Chris Johnson

an elegant evening at legacy grill

by lee ratliff

(\$30). She declared the dish wonderful, though she thought the shrimp suffered from just a tad too much char flavor. I couldn't help but poach a couple of bites from her plate, agreeing with her overall assessment, though I enjoyed the intense grilled flavor of the shrimp.

Throwing convention aside, we each accompanied our seafood with a glass of wonderful Napa Valley Markham Zinfandel (\$7/glass, \$59/bottle). This red Zin was the wine special of the evening and we couldn't pass up a by-the-glass price that represented such a value over the bottle. (I'm happy to say the flavorful seafood held up well to the bold flavor of the wine.)

We ended the meal with dessert and coffee. My apple buckle (\$10) was wonderful, a baked concoction of apple, oats, brown sugar and golden raisins, topped with creamy cinnamon ice cream. The beautifully presented red velvet cake (\$8) enjoyed by my dining companion was moist and tasty, with a rich cream cheese icing and dollops of marinated strawberries and chantilly cream.

The service seemed to rise to meet the standard set by the food. Our waiter was friendly and very knowledgeable of the menu and specials. The wait staff was attentive, but not hovering – glasses were kept constantly filled and dishes were promptly cleared without intrusion. The pace of the meal was near perfect, never hurried, yet not slow, although our desserts were delivered several minutes apart.

When I overheard a nearby diner ask about the absence of Caesar salad on the menu, his

waiter responded by offering to have the dish prepared off-menu – an example that should be standard practice, but unfortunately is a mark of above average service at most restaurants.

Proper attention to the details is what separates good service from superior service and the staff at Legacy Grill had the details well in hand. I didn't notice, but my date pointed out that the cream colored napkins already laid on the table when the maitre d' seated us were surreptitiously exchanged for dark napkins, presumably to avoid contrasting light napkin fuzz on our dark clothing. A glance at the other tables confirmed it – light napkins for light clothing, dark napkins for dark clothing.

Legacy Grill is the perfect Frisco locale for a business dinner, romantic evening or special occasion. Our meal totaled \$140 with tax and tip, so it's not an everyday dining establishment for most of us, but for the infrequent indulgence, it's a great choice.

Lee Ratliff is a Plano resident and well qualified for evaluating restaurants due to his extensive worldwide travel schedule.

Legacy Grill at Westin Stonebriar Resort

1549 Legacy Road
Frisco, Texas
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Lunch, Dinner
MC, V, AE

Food	
Service	
Atmosphere	
Value	

(scale of five forks)

