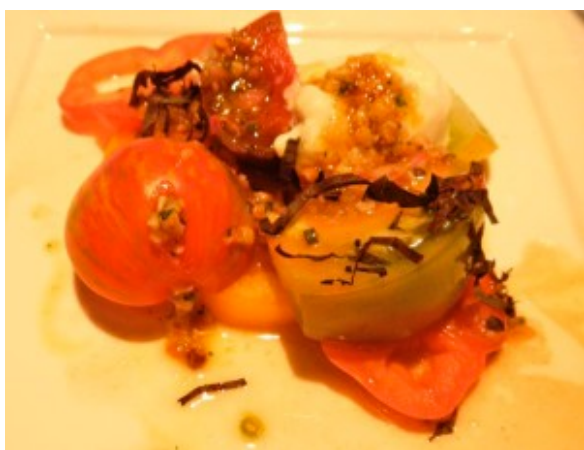


Squaw chef produces explosion of flavors

By Kathryn Reed

OLYMPIC VALLEY – Heirloom tomatoes, corn bisque and black trumpet mushrooms = heaven, even for a carnivore.

Chef Chad Shrewsbury had guests of this month's Study of the Seasons: Farm to Tahoe dinner at the Resort at Squaw Creek's Six Peaks Grille raving about his ability to transform ordinary ingredients into extraordinary culinary delights.



Heirloom tomatoes, above, and the corn bisque soup, below, were highlights of the July 5 Farm to Table dinner at Resort at Squaw Creek. Photos/Kathryn Reed

The sea salt on the tomatoes reminded Sue of growing up in Vermont when her mom would pick tomatoes out back and serve them sliced with a dash of salt.

Shrewsbury's dish elevated this classic first course with the addition of Burrata cheese (a mix of mozzarella and cream), purple basil (which is sweeter than regular basil), sherry

vinegar and a pine nut relish. While finely chopped, that relish provided an unexpected crunchiness because visually it was not obvious nuts were part of the dish.

Using more than just red tomatoes from Greg's Organics in Grass Valley also made the dish wonderful to just look at.

These dinners are all about using ingredients sourced from regional farms in the foothills near Lake Tahoe. Each course is then paired with a wine. The July 5 dinner featured Clos LaChance winery in San Martin.

Winemaker Bill Murphy chose a 2013 Sauvignon Blanc to pair with the heirloom tomatoes. Sue liked the fig she noted in the



wine, saying it complemented the pine nut relish. While many Sauvignon Blancs are fine without food, this one in particular had its fruitiness enhanced by the tomatoes.

For most people, the next course was pork belly with Blue Lake beans, jalapeno polenta, citrus salad and mole rapido. I had the corn bisque, which Sue (the carnivore) said was her favorite dish of the night.

The pork was served with a 2010 Reserve Pinot Noir. Murphy noted it was darker in color than most Pinots, which is what the Santa Cruz Mountains tend to produce.

Standing in front of the picture windows with a backdrop of the towering granite peaks that make up Squaw Valley Ski Resort, Murphy answered questions about his wines and the industry in general. He explained how he started in the wine business as a hobby. Now he and his wife have 150 acres of estate grown grapes.

Murphy believes the climate has more to do with the end product of a wine than the terroir. He points to the hot sunny days and cool nights of Santa Cruz for adding so much to the grapes he grows.

He is extremely familiar with the North Shore, having had a house at Squaw Valley for the last 20 years and at Tahoe Donner before that.



Chef Chad Shrewsbury has been with the Resort at Squaw Creek for seven years.

Sue liked that the Pinot had a long finish, meaning it stayed on her taste buds longer. It paired nicely with the pork, but was not a good choice for the bisque.

Pork belly is traditionally a fatter cut of meat. Sue noticed it was a bit salty, but a sip of wine took it away. The polenta was not spicy, despite having jalapenos in it.

A unique twist with the corn bisque was the pieces of gnocchi in it. It was the texture more than anything that complemented the silkiness of the soup. This bisque was so refined. While the corn flavor was obvious, it wasn't overwhelming. It could

have been a meal unto itself.

That is one of the things about this four-course dinner – the portions are extremely generous. None of this take two bites and call it a serving like so many places. But at the same time, come hungry or you won't be able to eat everything. Plus, the wine pours are ample.

I was not able to finish my next course because I was already getting full. But it is something I would love to have again. The pasta came with fava beans, spinach, cherry tomatoes, artichoke hearts and black trumpet mushrooms.

Those same mushrooms accompanied the Chilean sea bass that also had sweet corn and parsley tomato jus.

Sue said the earthiness of the mushrooms is so distinct that it was like they had been growing deep in the soil. I have such a thing for mushrooms that I made sure not a nibble was left on the plate.

Shrewsbury's skills as a vegetarian chef have been honed through the years because his wife doesn't eat meat. He's been at Six Peaks Grille for seven years.

"I like earthy food, stuff that you get fresh from the farmer," Shrewsbury told *Lake Tahoe News*. "I keep it basic, but I keep the flavor profile. If you explode the subtle flavors of food, people love it."



The next Farm to Table dinner is Aug. 30.

Based on the empty plates returning to the kitchen, Shrewsbury nailed it.

This third course was served with a crisp 2010 Reserve Chardonnay.

The only disappointment of the evening, though, was dessert. Fortunately we were so full it's not like we really needed more. The chocolate crème brûlée was not a traditional crème brûlée. It came with stone fruit, mint marmalade and powder raspberry. None of it seemed to go together.

Dessert came with a 2010 Estate Zinfandel. It was wonderful not to have a traditional dessert wine. Zins pair so well with chocolate, that this was perfect for the last course – even for those who didn't eat their dessert.

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Notes:

- The next dinner is Aug. 30. For more info, go online or call 530.583.6300.