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Knox - A New Addition to Restaurant Row

By Cathy Tyson



From left, Gary Singh and Jay Singh, Managers of Knox Photo Cathy Tyson

"I totally believe if you serve good food at a reasonable price, people will come in." said Gary Singh, Manager of Knox, located in that space that used to house Per Tutti on Mount Diablo Boulevard. Officially open since December, it's clear that the kitchen has mastered the art of Italian comfort food, with equally attentive service.

It's a bit of a family affair, Gary Singh and brother-in-law Jay Singh share managing duties and Gary's daughter is the hostess. In the kitchen is Italian chef Francesco Torre, from the Piedmont region of the country - the northwest side of the boot. Friendly, professional servers round out the staff. "We treat the employees like they're family," says Singh.

Starting this week, Knox is promoting their brand new \$3, \$4, \$5 Happy Hour, with beer on tap for \$3, well drinks \$4 and wine \$5. There will also be a small bar menu featuring \$3, \$4 and \$5 appetizers. Singh explains, "We want people to come in, give it a try, and come back for a meal."

Lunch and dinner menus are divided into antipasti, insalate, primi e zuppe, secondi and dessert, along with an extensive wine list and full bar.

On a recent Saturday night, the place was packed with hungry patrons creating a fairly loud buzz filling the intimate room. Chef Torre puts an innovative spin on Italian classics as well as many dishes Lamorindans may not be familiar with, like boned leg of lamb stuffed with frittata served with broccoli rabe.

Our party of four started with butter lettuce, black olive, oven dried cherry tomatoes, and taleggio cheese salad, and the little jam lettuce salad with pecorino cheese, walnuts and crispy prosciutto. Choice of a handful of salad dressings is served on the side. An order of mussels in a rich candied garlic broth and an interesting take on a trio of bruschette one each topped with roasted bell peppers, tomato and a basil eggplant mousse are two of the four starters offered. Thumbs up all the way around, salads crisp and fresh, mussels perfectly prepared, although the non-pitted olives were a distraction.

On the whole everything was quite good, although there were some minor bumps in the road. Celery root soup, something you don't see every day, was luscious, rich and creamy. Cod in parchment could have used a bit more seasoning. A delicious menu highlight was the server-recommended Tagliatelle al Sugo Toscano, or tagliatelle pasta made in-house with Tuscan style meat sauce.

Desserts were a mix of old and new, along with classics like Pannecotta, chocolate and espresso cake served with candied blood oranges, a table favorite was pear cooked in red wine and spices served in cinnamon custard. The unique deconstructed Tiramisu, was a very original interpretation, like nothing we had seen before.

"Give it a go, you won't be disappointed," said diner Andy Firth. Knox is open every day for lunch and dinner from 11:00 a.m., 3576 Mt. Diablo Boulevard.

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