



WESTCHESTER'S NEW, MODERN(E) MASTERPIECE

By Pamela Jacobs

Upon entering the sprawling, expansive space which houses Moderne Barn, in the town of Armonk in Westchester County, I was at once impressed by the scene—there wasn't an empty table, it was a weekday, and the place is huge—and delighted at the way my dining experience here was to bring me full circle. I had actually worked for the Livanos family, the restaurateurs behind Moderne barn, who also own Oceana, Abboccato and Molyvos in Manhattan, as well as the City Limits Diner in White Plains. In fact, my first job ever, when I was in high school, was at City Limits, and here I was at their latest venture, about to review it.

As I mentioned, the space is quite large, yet somehow retains a cozy, friendly atmosphere. The "urban country chic" décor is seen throughout, from the double height walnut barrel vaulted ceiling, to the large black and white prints of horses (by Roberto Dutesco, who is well known for his photography of the horses of Sable Island), and the successful combination of contemporary and classic/rustic details. My eyes were immediately drawn to the catwalk above the bar, which holds the restaurant's wine "cellar."

What I first noticed when I sat down and looked over the menu was not only the extensive and comprehensive wine list, including a nice selection of wines by the glass, but more uniquely, the beer selection. Having spent some time with beer connoisseurs, I've become trained in what constitutes a good assortment, and Moderne Barn's is quite impressive.

Executive Chef Ethan Kostbar's menu of simple yet sophisticated American cuisine with Mediterranean influences is, what I consider to be, just the right size. There

are plenty of choices without it becoming overwhelming, and I would be hard-pressed to find something on the menu that didn't sound tempting. For appetizers, I opted for the baby arugula salad, with peaches, feta, sunflower seeds, and lavender vinaigrette, and the grilled octopus with lima beans, pancetta, and lemon-oregano dressing.

The salad was light and farm-fresh, with a delightfully unique flavor coming from the lavender, which was a pleasant surprise. Equally enjoyable was the octopus appetizer, which was grilled perfectly, and the lemon-oregano dressing complemented it flawlessly. It was an excellent start to the meal, and while I wanted to try more starters (the Nonna meatballs, sautéed tiger shrimp, and fresh lump crab cake were all calling my name), I abstained, as I wanted to save room for the entrees.



Like the appetizers, there were many entrees I wanted to try: the selections of flat bread pizzas (basil pesto pizza, black mission fig pizza, and white anchovy pizza), the tortilla crusted salmon, the Wagyu beef hot dog, the Barn burger, the ricotta gnocchi, to name a few. But finally I went with the day boat scallops with mushroom medley, English peas, dill dumplings, and porcini broth, and the seafood risotto, with

mussels, clams, shrimp, calamari, and tomato. I was thrilled with my selections.

The scallops, which are a dish I often find can be ruined by either over or undercooking, were prepared perfectly, with the exact right amount of tenderness, and a ton of flavor. The dill dumplings which accompanied the scallops were superb—I could eat an entire dish of those. The seafood risotto was just as good, with generous amounts of fresh seafood, perfectly al dente risotto, and a flavor that was just excellent. Being the comfort food lover that I am, I also had to try a side dish of macaroni and cheese, which was exactly as I hoped it would be: rich, creamy, decadent, and perfect. Next time, I plan on trying the rosemary sea salt French fries, as every time a waiter walked by carrying them, I was tempted to steal them and run.

The dessert menu is sure to please anyone with a sweet tooth (I fall into that category), with choices such as vanilla bean cheesecake, Valrhona chocolate torte, and my personal favorite, three ways crème brûlée—tahitian vanilla, extra bitter chocolate, and caramel. It doesn't get any better than that.

For those who live in Westchester, Moderne Barn should come as a welcome contribution to the area's dining scene, and for those who live in the city, it's more than worth the trip. Armonk, and northern Westchester in general, is a beautiful area, and a short trip there, including a meal, or even a private party, at Moderne Barn will prove to be a fantastic excuse to get out of the city.

To my former employers, I say job well done!

Moderne barn is located at 430 Bedford Rd. at Route 22, Armonk, NY; 914-730-0001; www.modernebarn.com All Photos by Paul Johnson