

On The FOOD Front

THE FEAST IS ON! BY MCTAVISH

The Scotsman Visits the Patisserie Boissiere in Carmel

Dusk envelops Monterey County in long shadow fingers that slowly close to form the black fist of night. Across the vast span of darkness comes a growling, comes a groaning, as anguished primordial sounds pierce the calm fabric of reality. Listen closely! It's the McTavish stomach, a hungry and desperate creature with very little in the way of social skills. Fortunately my usual contact had assigned me to review Patisserie Boissiere, a fixture in the downtown of Carmel-by-the-tourists for an astounding 35 years. The restaurant and daytime cafe was originally run by the Boissieres, until they

perished in a car accident 12 years ago. Since then, it has been managed by the new owner Magdy Ibrahim and overseen by our gracious host Dane Williamson. So I hopped into my roadster and motored over to Carmel to meet my date. It seemed like a grand opportunity to renew a

friendship with Bette Noire — since the statute of limitations on our last feud had expired. In no time we'd commandeered a table in the corner of the old-style cottage with slanted roof, and given the select menu our careful scrutiny. I'd imagined a light dietetic meal, but fate had something else in store that evening. My first request was for the French onion soup gratinee (\$4.75). My mouth is watering retroactively, since the quest for the holy grail of onion soups has obsessed most of my adult life. It seems odd to base

a soup around the lowly onion, which is essentially an accent, a mere flavoring for other food. I mean, when was the last time you sipped a garlic soup, a salsa soup, or a horseradish soup? Anyway, the appeal of French onion soup, as epitomized by the superb one I ingested that night, is the combination of melted cheese and bread crusted over a crock filled with onions cooked in a beef broth. Yes, it's a complex, almost synergistic creation whose potency relies on each one of its ingredients. Make sure to sample the Boissiere version, because it's one of the specialties of the house.

Bette crossed her shapely gams and ordered the plate of six mushrooms



stuffed with spinach, asiago cheese, garlic and shallots (\$4.95). Using my standard — "Hey is that Clint over there?" — line, I was able to pry a 'shroom off her fork, and can vouch that it was a tasty little sucker. Need I mention we were drinking red wine the whole time? Yes, I was snorkeling around in a glass of 1996 Les Jamelles cabernet sauvignon. It was oaky, fruity and quite a smooth blend. Bette contented herself with a 1997 Bogle merlot. Ah, Bogle... What a name! It was a trifle young and needed to breathe (hyper-ventilate actually), but the Bogle still had an ample body which soon developed into a full-figured taste.

McTavish has always been a friend to the sheep, so for my entree I chose the

PLAYING THROUGH OCTOBER 11

Passion, Power, Love, Betrayal, Murder and the Macabre

Middleton & Rowley's

The Changeling

THOMAS BURKS
KATHRYN KOSER
ROBERT COLTER
KIMBERLY SCOTT
FRED NELSON & More!

FRIDAY & SATURDAY 8PM
SUNDAY 7PM

TICKETS
\$10-\$12

UNICORN THEATRE

Share The Magic.

320 Hoffman Avenue • Monterey
RESERVATIONS: 649-0259

TICKETS ALSO AVAILABLE AT
Carmel Video
Mid-Valley Shopping Center
Carmel Valley

Unicorn Theatre Inc. is a charitable, non-profit organization. Donations and volunteer queries may be sent to Unicorn Theatre, 320 Hoffman Avenue, Monterey, CA 93940

www.redshift.com/~unicorntheat

everything under THE SUN

find it in THE SUN'S classifieds and service directory

shepherd's pie (\$10.95). It was excellent. Though once I'd breached the luxurious topping of mashed potatoes baked to a crisp, I found it to be closer to a stew inside. (By my definition, a pie is moist, yes, but essentially dry, while a stew is more akin to a dense and congealed soup.) Anyway, excavating the ground beef and vegetables in a bacon and wine sauce was well worth it! Bette tried the salmon baked in parchment paper (\$14.95). She loved every bite of that tender pink fish, surrounded by vegetables and rice, allowing only a minor amount of salmon to be hooked by Captain McTavish. If you were wondering, the parchment paper tasted to me like any other parchment paper you might eat at Kinkos.

Anticipation colored our faces and the air grew thin. We were approaching the summit of our gastronomic expedition — dessert! Since the cafe is renowned for pastries and desserts, it would take sobriety, patience and a keen intellect to make the right choice. So I was ordered to remain at the table while Bette surveyed the options. I'll never underestimate that mood-swinging minx again, for she chose the chocolate caramel torte with walnuts and fresh cream. Though I wouldn't recognize a torte if it fell from the sky and landed on my bulbous honker, that was one spectacular dessert. We fought over our slice tooth and nail until I secured the final bite. A bittersweet victory however, since it re-triggered the old feud between Bette and I. She whispered to me in parting: "Men are from Detroit, Women are from Cleveland." Ah, but such is the price a food critic must pay.

For an evening of old world charm, be sure to visit the Patisserie on its 35th anniversary.

(Patisserie Boissiere serves lunch and dinner. Entrees \$10 to \$15. 624-5008. On Mission, between Ocean Avenue and Seventh in Carmel.)

Elegy for O' Kane's

A longtime reader asked if I'd comment on the closing of O' Kane's Irish pub on Sunday, September 13th. Yes, McTavish spent many a night in O' Kane's between 1994 and 1997 — with fellow musicians, artisans and cheese-separating scoundrels. After gigs, classes and theater rehearsals, the ranks of the frugal would file in to feast on their legendary 10 p.m. half-priced menu. No one ever claimed the food was gourmet-quality, but the portions were large, the price was right, and friendly servers like Annie and Sarah made you feel right at home. Sadly, for at least the last year O' Kane's has been foundering like a torpedoed battleship in the swells of a storm. It all began when the amiable servers and bartenders jumped ship, then the food quality sank and the prices rose — making the half-price menu seem overpriced and the regular menu seem downright absurd. Though my visit became rare, McTavish did visit the pub on Prescott the very Saturday before it closed, unaware of what was to transpire. There was the smell of defeat in the air. Worse, there was the smell of a burst sewer pipe in the air. Woefully understaffed, O' Kane's lone English waitress ran about like an Edgewater Emporium captive chicken with its head cut off. By that point, their once proud selections of beef stew and chicken pot pie were reduced to a viscous and fetid gumb of dark, mystery meats interlaced with vegetables that could be carbon-dated back to the pre-Cambrian age.

Thankfully, the next day Dick O' Kane had the courage to put the wounded beast out of its misery. McTavish thanks the establishment for the fond memories, and gives a hearty pat on the head to the brave employees who remained on deck during the final typhoon. Excelsior!