

# Eight Thumbs Up for 10 Below

By LINDEN GROSS  
writer, editor, writing coach

Restaurants attached to hotels have a notoriously bad reputation. But after dinner at the Oxford Hotel's trendy 10 Below, which looks like it belongs in New York, San Francisco or Los Angeles, I will never make that assumption again.

A friend and I launched the evening with a dozen sweet and briny oysters served icy with plenty of lemon—just the way I like them. That was just the start of things to come. We got really serious when the rest of our party joined us an hour later and we sat down to dinner.

The four of us had agreed to split the appetizers, which were as dramatically presented as any plates I've seen in town. One taste of the huge, succulent, seared diver scallops and I regretted that I had to share. I just loved how the sweetness of the tender scallops and the fruitiness of the pomegranate-molasses syrup danced with the salty chewiness of

the bacon and the earthiness of the delicate mushroom pancake beneath.

Of course, sharing meant that I got to try the Verrine Flight. Of the three fresh mini-salads—crab and avocado; slightly sweet, house-smoked trout; and roasted baby beets with a velvety goat cheese mousse—served in glasses held by a metal arch, the latter was by far my favorite. We also sampled the duck confit with house-made herb gnocchi and wild mushrooms. I wished the duck skin had been crispier, but that was my only complaint. Featuring the duck with its natural jus instead of a sweet sauce actually let the taste of the bird come through.

The star of the appetizer round had to be the Sonoma Valley seared foie gras, served atop brioche French toast with pear-vanilla jam and port syrup. "Oh my. This is divine," exclaimed one of my dining companions. Exactly. "Want to pass the foie gras?" asked my dad. "Not real-

10  
below



Foie Gras on Brioche French Toast

ly," I answered before reluctantly handing it over. Note to self: definitely no sharing next time.

I didn't think we'd manage to do more than sample the entrées after such generous portions, but the dishes were so good we finished all but one. The filet of beef served with a red wine demi glacé and blue cheese crème was memorable. My only suggestion: more garlic in the whipped garlic mashed potatoes. The escolar in a red curry coconut broth was downright perfect. The golden brown crust on the fish contrasted with the moist flaky interior. The red curry, with its loud whisper of spiciness, let fish sing instead of overpowering it.

Although it has taken 10 Below some time to find

itself, the restaurant is clearly coming into its own. But while its continental direction peppered with an international flair has finally been nailed down, food and beverage director David Limburg, who just took over the kitchen helm, is going to be making some changes. For starters, look for regularly revamped menus and weekly fresh sheets.

Limburg is also seeking to create the kind of country club familiarity he cultivated during his years opening Pronghorn.

That includes being able to routinely accommodate special requests on the food front. "If you don't see what you want, we'll work with you," says Limburg.

We put him to the test when we didn't find another

**10 Below**  
10 NW Minnesota Avenue, Bend  
Phone: (541) 382-1010  
Director of Sales: Davis Smith  
Hours:  
Breakfast - 6-11:30am Daily  
Lunch - 11:30am-2pm Daily  
Lounge - 2pm to close  
Happy Hour 2-6pm & 9pm to close



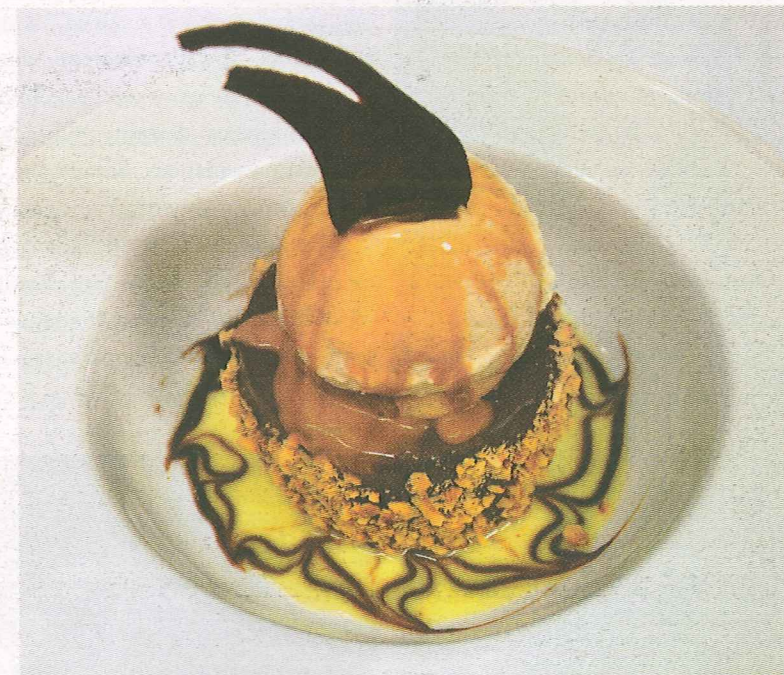
10 Below Dining Room



Ahi Appetizer

entrée on the menu he's about to overhaul that really spoke to us. On the fly, the kitchen produced a gorgeous plate of crusty, translucent scallops served with butternut squash puree and risotto, beautifully melding salt and sweet. They also served up a tasty chicken breast stuffed with spinach and garlic, wrapped in prosciutto and accompanied by slender roasted asparagus tips.

We ended our meal with desserts and a flight of innovative adult beverages created by bar manager Columbine Quillen, who makes her own fruit purees, bitters and more. Our favorite was the Hauté Maté, made with Ava Maté cured vodka, Prana Maté nectar, Shanti tincture, fresh squeezed lemon, a dash of absinthe, and egg white. It was unexpectedly superb, just like the rest of our meal.



Dessert at 10 Below