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## Devon Seafood Grill Gets it Right

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The closing of Red Rock Café signaled the end of an era for Milwaukee's seafood dining scene. After all, the Shorewood restaurant was a long-lived favorite. But that disappointment has been tempered by the arrival of the Devon Seafood Grill at Bayshore Town Center.

The national chain -- which has locations in Philadelphia and Chicago -- claims it gets two shipments of fish flown in fresh -- never frozen -- every day. And it tastes like it.

Since it's located outside the enclosed portion of Bayshore, Devon doesn't feel at all like a mall restaurant. Entering off a street instead of a concourse, the eatery is pleasantly dimly lit with "upscale rustic" stone walls and a calming mix of colors. Stacks of "firewood" built into the walls remind us there's a grill back in the kitchen.

There is a fairly large bar and a few private and semi-private dining rooms, but the main dining room is open enough to not feel cramped but not so large as to feel impersonal.

After a less than stellar experience with service at a new Downtown eatery recently, my dining companion and I were pleased to find that our cheery -- but not overly so -- server was well acquainted with the menu and its options. However, her knowledge of the wine list didn't seem especially intimate.

While we perused the menu, we were treated to fresh from the oven sweet drop biscuits that are amazing and, well, delectably sweet. The biscuits would appear poised to become a local favorite.

To get started, we chose the fresh mozzarella and tomato salad, on which slices of fresh mozzarella lay atop red and gold tomatoes with watercress and frisee. Although the mozzarella was indeed fresh and soft, the tomatoes -- perhaps unsurprisingly in January -- were pale and lacked flavor. That was about the sole misstep in an otherwise delicious dinner.

We also had a plate of the steamed little neck clams which arrived with about 18 clams swimming in a garlic, white wine and clam broth. The clams were well picked-over and all were gaping, fresh and tender in a liquid that transmitted just the right amount of garlic flavor.

For entrees, we selected the seafood mixed grill and the seared scallops with asparagus and a lobster risotto.

The mixed grill assembled a crab cake, seared salmon, scallops and shrimp and added roasted potatoes and sautéed spinach. All of the shellfish was perfectly seared and the crab cake was so full of crab and so absent of filler that it barely held together. The salmon was still flaky but the chef was wise to get it off the grill when he did. Another minute and it would have dried out.

The scallops wore a dazzling sear and were cooked to perfection. Years of ordering scallops has proved that this is never guaranteed at Milwaukee restaurants. But Devon got them right and the

risotto, although a little beyond al dente, was creamy and radiated the perfume of lobster.

Despite the fact that the portions suggested we ought to pass on dessert, we couldn't pass up the tray when it arrived. We selected mixed berries with a mousse-filled cannolo and a chocolate lava cake. The lightness of the berries was complemented by the richness of its accompaniment and the lava cake was a chocolate lover's dream come true.

Considering the portion sizes and the freshness of the seafood, the fact that two diners had appetizers, entrees and desserts -- along with a Spotted Cow and a glass of wine -- \$106 seemed like a reasonable tab at the end. Certainly not a place a family on a budget can get to regularly, but not out of the occasional splurge zone.

Sure, Devon is a chain and sure it's located in a mall -- two things that usually keep us away -- but in seafood-starved Milwaukee fresh fish at a reasonable price and in a warm, comfortable setting is the right equation for getting us to return.