

Swirl Wine Bistro

1435 Lyons Rd, Coconut Creek
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by Linda Brockman

It's called Swirl Wine Bistro, but ask chef and owner Judith Able and she'll tell you it's all about the food. She received her culinary training at Johnson & Wales University and perfected her craft in Europe. While running Chef of Distinction, a successful South Florida catering company, she was encouraged by clients to make her cooking more accessible to everyone. So, in March 2017, she and husband Mike opened Swirl in the Lyons Plaza, on the corner of Lyons and Coconut Creek Parkway in Coconut Creek.

While Chef Judith works away in the kitchen, accountant-by-day Mike actively runs the front of the house. He describes dishes with enthusiasm and knowledge, sounding



Bruschetta

like a master chef himself. But his wife gets all the credit. "She's the talent," said Mike, happy to be Judith's guinea pig. "I just know how it should taste, look, and smell."

My friend Janis and I dined on several culinary creations at Swirl. We began with two small bites: Bruschetta on Grilled Baguette and Eggplant with Herb Focaccia. The bruschetta had a simple but delicious sprinkling of heirloom cherry

tomatoes, olive oil, and cheese (parmesan and mozzarella). The robust eggplant was served with homemade focaccia, toasted and cut into small pieces for dipping. Other appetizers worthy of mention are the Tuna Poke and Baked Brie.

For the main dishes, we shared Oxtail Ravioli and Snapper Escoveitch. My favorite was the ravioli, a rich and delicious melding of flavors and textures. Sitting in a decadent truffle beurre noisette (brown butter) sauce, the ravioli has meat filling from the tail of a cow. The tough meat is cut into sections, braised and softened for days, then cooked again in a wine sauce. Mike said the oxtail preparation is popular in Jamaica and South America, but also dates back to the



Eggplant with Focaccia

days when slaves had to make the best of lesser cuts of meat.

Swirl's dishes are carefully made and exquisitely presented. The Snapper Escoveitch is a Caribbean dish that uses vinegar to pickle the fish and vegetables. The snapper, which was slightly dry, is served on a cassava (a tropical root vegetable) cake – which Mike describes as a Jamaican knish. I found the snapper's elegant and creative presentation more impressive than the dish itself.

While there are a few anchor items – like the oxtail ravioli and customer fave brisket sliders – on the menu, there are also seasonal choices that change often depending on what is available from the purveyor and which ingredients inspire Judith's imagination. Everything is freshly made. Judith makes her own pasta, smokes her own salmon, and bakes the bread.

On the evening we dined at Swirl, we were treated to an amazing – and I mean amazing – dessert that is not normally on the menu. It begins with a pear that has been poached in Riesling and encased in a fine, dark chocolate ganache, sitting in a pool of crème anglaise. Did I mention it was amazing? Wow.

We also had a taste of Judith's rich, house-made smoked lavender ice cream. Ice cream flavors change, as do other dessert menu items. I am looking forward to trying more of Swirl's sweet concoctions.

The prices are what you would expect to pay for a gourmet meal. Menu entrees range up to \$32.99 for braised Kobe beef cheeks and \$20.99 for a vegetarian mushroom and goat cheese mousse tart.

Janis, who always drinks Pinot Noir, had the opportunity to try the Decoy brand for the first time. She found it to have "a light fruity taste" and could taste the difference in quality from other brands. Decoy is the more affordable brand from the Duckhorn winery in Sonoma. Decoy is sold by the glass at Swirl, while Duckhorn is sold by the half



Snapper Escoveitch

bottle, Mike said. Swirl carries select wines that can't be found locally. One example, he says, is Tanagra, a Syrah from Spain "that tastes like France."

Mike asks diners what kind of wine they usually enjoy, "then I give them variations of what they like so they can try something new." Patrons can get on Swirl's email list and Facebook page to find out about occasional wine tastings and food-and-wine pairings.

Swirl also has a nice selection of craft beers on tap. I had the "Weed Reaper" (at Mike's recommendation), which is produced at Holy Mackerel brewery in Pompano Beach. The IPA looked so pretty in the glass, with a light

amber and pinkish hue and refreshing grapefruit undertones. Holy Mackerel even made a beer just for Swirl – and keeping with the grim theme – "Don't Swirl the Reaper."

In an effort to help promote area artists, Judith rotates the artwork at Swirl. When we were there, paintings and prints from Lauderdale-by-the-Sea artist Dana Sardano lined the walls.

Swirl is open from 3pm to midnight on Wednesdays and Thursday, until 1am on Friday and Saturday nights, and 10am to 10pm on Sundays. The restaurant is closed on Monday and Tuesdays to allow Judith to run her catering business. 



Oxtail Ravioli

Poached Pear in Chocolate