

uptown & down AND ALL AROUND

ETHNIC EATS

The Merriam-Webster dictionary describes the adjective “ethnic” as “of or relating to races or large groups of people who have the same customs, religion, origin, etc.” So, quite vaguely, ethnic foods can be any foods at all. Every culinary custom is connected to some group or another. **BY MICHAEL C. UPTON | PHOTOGRAPHY BY NICK GOULD**

FOR THE SAKE OF CLARITY in this, the inaugural edition of *Uptown & Down*, we’ll describe “ethnic eats” as those not American or German (because this county has its fair share of smorgasbords and scrapple). We’re looking for food outside the norm.

I gathered a group of friends and set out on a gastronomic journey; our first stop is **Citronnelle** on West Orange Street, a cozy jewel box of a restaurant serving modern French cuisine (remember, let’s rethink the word “ethnic”). Rain began to fall earlier in the day and we shuffled into Citronnelle a bit disheveled, yet excited to dine.

Safely inside the super-intimate restaurant, owner and manager Susan Louie and lead server Christopher Atencio quickly stepped to our table. (Tip: upon entering Citronnelle, sit down, relax and before even looking at the menu, order dessert. I’m serious, but more on that later.)

As this was our first stop on an evening devoted to eating, we fittingly ordered every item from the First Course section of the Citronnelle menu. (Except one item I wanted most: a rainbow-beet salad with heirloom greens, St. Agur double-cream bleu cheese, Chinese watermelon radish and pistachio vinaigrette. Why we didn’t order this scrumptious-sounding salad, I don’t know – maybe because I was distracted by dessert.)

We did place orders for the creamy crab croquettes, which were extremely creamy in the most wonderful way; the classic frisée aux lardons salad; truffled mushroom croquettes, which came with an amazing butternut-squash purée; and the vichyssoise. The vichyssoise is an absolute dream and is adorned with the most adorable mini-grilled-cheese crouton. We also shared a side of aligot, simply because none of us had heard of it before. On the most



At Citronnelle, Chef Rafael Perez’s modern French cuisine is influenced by the flavors of Asia, Africa and Lancaster County.

basic level, aligot is a French version of mashed potatoes; however, the consistency is like a dreamy fondue and the side dish incorporates melted cheese.

Far from being our final course of the night, I could not leave Citronnelle without having a soufflé. The signature dessert is served with an essence of lemongrass, coconut and kaffir-lime crème anglaise (the beauty of Citronnelle lies in its worldwide influences, which take it beyond a standard French restaurant).

As instructed by our server, we opened a crack in the top of the flawless soufflé – steam vaporized from the top like a smoldering volcano of sweetness – and gently poured the crème anglaise (or English cream) into the center. Simply watching the act and absorbing the scent was enough to send our taste buds into overdrive. One step short of licking the bowl clean (because we are ladies and gentlemen in a French restaurant, after all), we devoured the dish without hesitation or apprehension. So, the reason to think “dessert first” at Citronnelle is the soufflé, which takes approximately 25