

Dining

Riverside view is sublime, and the food's mostly fine

By **HEATHER McPHERSON**
SENTINEL FOOD EDITOR

If there's a restaurant location award, The Grille at Riverview in New Smyrna Beach is the clear winner.

Tucked close to the north causeway bridge on the Indian River, the restaurant is part of a cozy enclave on Flagler Avenue that includes a spa and a boutique Victorian hotel.

The Grille has a lot going for itself in the kitchen, too — although on the first visit, I wasn't quite sure. (And that's why we visit restaurants at least twice.) The first dinner started at a great table and devolved into an evening marred by a hodgepodge of minor problems, from lackluster food choices to a wait staff that ran hot and cold.

But the second visit was a different story. The kitchen was on the mark, and the server was jovial without being silly; attentive without hovering; and gracious without crossing over to cloying. Drinks came quickly, and our server let us pace the rest of the evening — no pile-up of plates from appetizers to salads to entrees.

For appetizers, the chipotle aioli was a flavor-packed change from the traditional tomato sauce for the calamari Parmesan (\$8.95). And the richness of the sesame-seared ahi tuna (\$10.95) worked well with the soy aioli and pickled ginger.

The spinach and crab dip casserole (\$10.95) was a bit of a mess. The addition of the chipotle aioli here fought the crab, spinach and roasted red peppers for palate time. The mussels (\$9.95), steamed in chardonnay infused with basil, garlic and diced tomatoes, were sweet and juicy. The recipe equation worked and left a flavorful broth



ROBERTO GONZALEZ/ORLANDO SENTINEL

The Grille at Riverview features dishes such as sesame-seared ahi tuna (clockwise from bottom), Maple Leaf duck and rack of lamb.

to sop up with bread.

The salads (\$4.95-\$9.95), which include Caesar, spinach and field greens, are available in large and small portions. The entree-sized strawberry and baby brie composition (\$12.95) would benefit from less dressing. It was listed as raspberry vinaigrette and, while tasty, was a bit too viscous for vinaigrette.

The more straightforward the entrée, the more the kitchen shined. The chicken francese (\$16.95), for example, was delicately breaded and served with lemon-butter sauce. And the

char sui Atlantic salmon (\$19.95) was lightly glazed with an Asian barbecue sauce. Also, the New Zealand rack of lamb (\$44.95), encrusted in a rosemary Dijon mustard, was so tender and juicy, it hardly needed the demi-glace sauce accompaniment.

Even the Grouper Oscar (\$28.95), a bit more complicated mix of flavors and textures with the addition of crab, asparagus and a classic hollandaise sauce, pulled together nicely.

The medium-rare crispy skin Maple Leaf duck (\$23.95) was

The Grille at Riverview

Where: 101 Flagler Ave., New Smyrna Beach (at the north causeway bridge). By water, mile marker 845 on the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway, south of Ponce Inlet.

When: dinner 4:30-9 p.m. Sunday-Thursday, 4:30-10 p.m. Friday and Saturday (lunch is served 11:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Monday-Saturday, 10:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Sunday brunch).

Reservations: Recommended, especially on weekends.

Beverages: Full bar, including

sparkling-wine cocktails and many specialty martinis. Wines by the glass, plus a decent international list of wines by the bottle.

Sound level: Pleasant conversation buzz inside. Live entertainment on the outside decks on weekends.

Wheelchair access: Yes.

Entrees: \$16-\$45 per person.

Credit: AE, MC, V.

Call: 386-428-1865.

Online:

TheGrilleAtRiverview.com

Dining on a budget

From 4:30 to 6 p.m. Monday-Friday, The Grille offers a sunset menu (\$12-\$17). Each entree includes a house salad or the chef's soup du jour, bread and complimentary glass of house wine, beer or a single cocktail. But even the main menu has budget dining options:

Dinner under \$15: Bowl of hearty New England clam chowder, French onion soup or soup of the day (\$4.95) and large Caesar salad (\$8.95).

Dinner under \$20: Pair the Canadian black mussels (\$9.95) with the small walnut and blue cheese salad (\$6.95). Be sure to ask for bread to soak up the garlic-wine broth from the mussels.

neither medium-rare nor crispy. But the gorgonzola custard it was served with was fabulous. The crab-stuffed Creole shrimp (\$22.95) had little flavor.

The desserts are quite ordinary, except for the profiterole (\$5.95), an ice-cream éclair not to be missed. The chef takes

baked puff pastry and fills it with a generous scoop of vanilla ice cream and then glazes the pastry with hot fudge sauce.

For weekend beachgoers or Volusia County residents, The Grille at Riverview is a good waterfront option for sunset suppers.