

LORI'S PICKS



Carrabba's Italian Grill

675 Troy –Schenectady Road • Latham, NY
518 785-8886 • www.carrabbas.com



I am always looking for unique and outstanding restaurants in our area that are in some way distinctive. Although chain restaurants are really not what Lori's picks is all about, every now and then I do come across one that is worth writing about.

Recently, I decided to try out Carrabba's for a Sunday afternoon lunch. First let me say that the ambiance is warm, casual, and inviting. From the terra cotta floors and walls, to the pictures of old world Italy, the décor exudes all things Italian. Grape trellises grace the ceiling, and a lovely brick fire place warms the bar area.

Carrabba's menu is extensive, with an emphasis on freshly prepared dishes. Carrabba's handmade pizza is made fresh daily, and baked in their wood-burning ovens. Meat and fresh seafood are grilled to order, and seasoned with Carrabba's unique seasoning blends.

We were brought a basket of warm Italian bread, served with infused olive oil to begin our meal. We decided to try Carrabba's calamari as an appetizer. The calamari were lightly battered (flour, salt, and pepper) and fried to a perfect golden brown. They were

served with both lemon butter and marinara sauce. The calamari was light and delicate with just the right texture.

For our entrees I ordered veal parmigiana (one of my favorites). My companion tried one of their specials "the Damian." My veal parmigiana was a success. The veal was very tender and the tomato sauce was light and aromatic with a bit of a kick. The melted combination of Italian cheeses was just right. My meal came with a side order of al dente cavatappi amatriciana (cork screw pasta) with tomato sauce. My companion chose the Damian -grilled salmon with the sauce of the day, lobster ravioli, two large grilled scallops and shrimp, with Italian green beans on the side. Everything in his dish was fresh and flavorful. The salmon came in a pesto sauce (basil, onion, garlic, herbs and olive oil) which was a perfect complement. The lobster ravioli was made with a light pasta dough, and the filling and cream sauce were pleasing to the palate. The grilled shrimp and scallops were seasoned in some of Carrabba's secret seasoning, and were brimming with flavor.

For dessert we had ricotta cheesecake served with a strawberry reduction sauce. Let me sum it up by saying it was silky, smooth, creamy, dreaminess. Our decaffeinated cappuccino was rich, full-bodied, and a real treat.

Our lunch at Carrabba's was wonderful. Our service was outstanding. Thanks James! The food was great and the portions satisfying. Carrabba's is a cut above your typical chain restaurant. I would definitely recommend you try it for yourself.

Miyako – Japanese Steakhouse and Sushi Bar

2027 Western Avenue • Guilderland, NY 12203
518 482-1080 • www.miyakosteakhouse.com



Miyako has been considered one of the finest Japanese restaurants in the Capital District for quite some time. I recently decided to pay them a visit to see if they are still living up to their venerable reputation.

Miyako's main dining room is done in light wood tones, and houses both the bar and sushi bar. It is open, airy, and comfortable. All of the décor has an Asian flair from the light fixtures to the Japanese inspired waterfall. The hibachi dining room has a similar feel, but with two large, flat screened televisions.

There is a plethora of Japanese delights to choose from on Miyako's extensive and varied menu. Everything is overseen by licensed Japanese Master Chef Toshi Yamaguchi... one of the many reasons that Miyako turns out such consistently fine cuisine. Whether you are desiring sushi,

tempura, shumai, udon or soba (thick wheat or thin buckwheat noodle dishes), nabemono (hot pot dish) or a hibachi meal, you will definitely find something to suit your tastes.

We began our meal by sampling the evergreen roll (a sushi special). The roll consisted of salmon and avocado rolled with green wasabi, tobiko (flying fish caviar) and sprinkled with sesame seeds. It was extremely fresh and the flavors really popped. The sesame seeds added the perfect bit of texture to the evergreen roll.

For my meal I decided on the hibachi chicken entrée. It came with onion soup, green salad with ginger dressing, hibachi vegetables, ginger and mustard sauces and steamed rice. The onion soup was a gentle clear broth, with slices of fresh mushrooms and diced scallions. I always enjoy a salad with ginger dressing, and my entrée was excellent. The chicken was tender, fresh, and savory, and the vegetables in the hibachi medley were fresh and crisp. My meal was delicious, healthful and satisfying. My companion had the delicious nabe yaki udon. It was a hot pot dish (soup) that was a combination of shrimp tempura, chicken, egg, and vegetables in a clear broth. It was an interesting and tasty combination of flavors- very pleasing to the palate.

We had an enjoyable evening at Miyako Japanese Steak House and Sushi Bar. The food was fabulous, the portions more than adequate, and our service was prompt and courteous. It is easy to see why Miyako's has kept such a long lasting reputation for excellence.

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Aperitivo Bistro

426 State Street • Schenectady, NY
518 579-3371 • www.aperitivobistro.com



Schenectady can boast of a wonderful new restaurant called Aperitivo Bistro. Whether you desire a meal "piatti" or a sampling of their outstanding cuisine "piattini," Aperitivo Bistro will not disappoint.

Aperitivo Bistro's ambiance is cosmopolitan, sophisticated, and sleek. The exposed brick walls with recessed candlelight and cobalt blue pendent lights over the tables add a unique and classy touch.

The Aperitivo Bistro offers a varied menu serving lunch, pub fare and dinner. Besides their daily specials, there is a wide array of culinary delights to choose from. Aperitivo offers an assortment of appetizers, sushi, salads, soups, specialty pizzas (baked in their brick oven), entrees ("piatti") and tapas portions ("piattini").

While we were perusing the many tempting offerings on the menu, we enjoyed a basket of delicious Italian bread with olive oil, aioli butter and tapenade. I finally decided to try the vegetable four cheese soup- a puree of split peas, celery, red onion and red peppers blended with an Italian cheese mixture. It was superb in consistency and taste. My companion ordered the mini crab cakes.

Chock full of sweet, fresh crab meat, and served with wasabi aioli and red pepper pesto, they were light and delicious. He also ordered the broccoli rabe cooked with lemon, olive oil garlic and red chilies...excellent!

Having thoroughly enjoyed our appetizers we were looking forward to our entrees. I ordered the grilled swordfish, served with garlic mashed potatoes, grilled asparagus and golden raisin cranberry chutney. My meal was exemplary. Everything was prepared to perfection, and the blending of flavors was masterful. The chutney was an ideal accompaniment to the swordfish, and the garlic mashed potatoes and asparagus were mouth-watering. My companion was equally happy with his choice of pan seared red snapper. Spiced with cumin, garlic, coriander, paprika, and pepper and served with sausage, spinach, olives, peppadews and parmigiano reggiano, the dish was a true symphony of flavors.

For dessert we enjoyed the chocolate soufflé and the warm banana cheesecake. The soufflé was fresh out of the oven, and served with vanilla ice cream. It was everything a dessert soufflé should be...sweet light and airy. The banana cheesecake was wrapped in fried phyllo dough and served warm with vanilla ice cream. It was sinful, but worth every calorie! Our decaffeinated cappuccino was so rich and full-bodied that we double checked to make sure it was decaf, and sure enough it was.

Aperitivo Bistro offers a first- rate dining experience. From the cuisine, to the service and ambiance, it is an absolute delight. I am pleased to say that Aperitivo Bistro deserves a rave review!