

Lori's Picks

Restaurant Reviews



74 State

74 State St. • Albany, NY • (518) 434-7410



Situated in the heart of Albany's business and entertainment districts sits a true gem for both lodging and dining. 74 State is a choice destination for those seeking gourmet cuisine, superb accommodations, first-rate service, and a myriad of amenities for both business and social functions.

This upscale retreat boasts seventy-four rooms and suites; state-of-the-art technology; fiber optic services and WIFI throughout; board room; fitness center; piano bar; Marche Market Bistro serving breakfast, lunch, and dinner; and valet parking.

My overnight retreat at this most special of destinations began by getting settled in our lovely and meticulously maintained accommodations. Subtle tones of green and the palest gold were the backdrop for a glowing gas fireplace, classic and tasteful furnishings, and a spectacular view of the city of Albany. The bathroom, too, was done in fine taste. Spacious with a marble floor, granite sink area, handsome mahogany cabinetry, whirlpool and stand alone shower, it was absolutely perfect.

Before going to Marche for our dinner reservations, we peered into the Bistro/Bar at 74. The expansive windows, cozy fireplace area, and intimate seating areas throughout made for a wonderful ambiance to relax with friends, or perhaps conduct some business, in fine style. The baby grand piano tucked in the corner was the ideal finishing touch to this impressive room.

Marche has a sophisticated yet simple décor. Decorated in soothing tones of taupe with dark woods throughout, the atmosphere is both serene and inviting—

understated elegance at its best. Executive Chef Brain Molino has gained quite a bit of attention for his innovative and winning ways in the kitchen. A graduate of The Culinary Institute of America, Chef Molino has worked in such notable establishments as Glen Sanders Mansion and Jack's Oyster House, under Master Chef Dale Miller. Chef Molino's cuisine is best described as contemporary American, with his sauces being lighter than traditional French fare. Marche's menu is notably fresh, revolving around local, seasonal produce.

I had heard that Chef Molino makes an extraordinary risotto, so my companion and I began there. This particular evening, mushroom and caramelized onion risotto was featured, and it was everything we had expected and more. Creamy in consistency and bursting with flavor, this risotto was to-die-for. Sampling two of the enticing salad selections, we were equally pleased. The asparagus salad—prepared with fried egg, Benton's bacon and parmesan reggiano—was phenomenal and I savored every bite. My companion's endive salad was also a delight—Belgian endive, fresh pears and candied walnuts, all drizzled in a champagne walnut dressing. Before our entrees arrived, my companion indulged in fresh and fabulous oysters on the half-shell. I selected filet mignon for my entrée, while my companion decided on the bouillabaisse. My filet mignon was cooked to a perfect medium, fork tender, succulent, and exquisite. It was served with farm fresh green beans and carrots, potato gratin, blue cheese butter, and pear and cocoa nib compote. My meal was superb, by any standards. My companion's bouillabaisse was replete with red snapper, scallops, and

shrimp prepared with fennel in a shrimp broth, and garnished with saffron rouille. From the freshness of the seafood, to the aromatic broth, it was a treasure.

We ended our evening of superlative dining with two house-made desserts. The seasonal fruit cobbler, made with fresh blueberries and pears topped with vanilla ice cream, was fresh out of the oven and oh so comforting. My companion had a sampling of house-made cheesecakes that included Tequila lime, peanut butter chocolate, New York, and almond with almond brittle. One was more luscious than the next—every cheesecake lover's fantasy. We sipped rich, smooth, decaffeinated cappuccino as we relished our desserts.

After a comfortable night's sleep, we awoke early and made our way down to breakfast. The choices were vast, with something to please every palate. I chose the wholegrain buckwheat pancakes, and my companion, the American breakfast. My pancakes were served with warm Sheldon Farms maple syrup and homemade butter, and were garnished with fresh strawberries and blueberries. The American breakfast—homemade wheat toast, two eggs, breakfast potatoes, bacon, sausage, and a fresh fruit cup—was prepared beautifully.

Our stay at 74 State was wonderful in every aspect. From our accommodations to our dining experience, we were thoroughly impressed and indulged. Experience the wonders of 74 State for yourself!