



Arbutus Grille & Wine Bar

Usually Secret Diner comes home after dinner and writes up the night's review. Not after Arbutus Grille though. I was so contentedly tired from such a full dining experience, I came home and went straight to bed. Dining at Brentwood Bay Lodge's luxurious restaurant is an experience – a feast for all of the senses. Lest Secret Diner sound like a cliché, let me explain:

Sound – Entering into the airy restaurant from the lobby, the first thing I noticed was the flaming sputtering from the wood fire burning in the kitchen. From my window table, I could easily see the cooks busily chopping and prepping in their state-of-the-art workspace. The flames in the kitchen were matched by the flames in the fireplace on the opposite side of the long room. Soft jazz was playing, and the room, though early in the evening, was abuzz with a wide mix of diners.

Touch – The moment we settled into our chairs, I could tell it would be a long night. Soft, sumptuous, leather tall-backed chairs were all too welcoming. Secret Diner should have known right then no work would be done that evening.

Smell – I could smell our salads before they hit the table. Gathered Organic Greens, came with diced root vegetables and was tossed in apple bacon vinaigrette. The aroma of the vinaigrette was intoxicating and

an excellent match to our creamy Inniskillin Viognier. A fresh bread basket arrived at the table with 3 freshly baked offerings – again, aroma was addictive. It didn't take us long to polish off the delicious selection of seeded herb, French bread and herb biscuits.

Sight – The space is beautiful – smartly appointed with the aforementioned dark chairs and white dressed tables. Fresh flowers and original artworks abound. The room hugs the bay, and a large expanse of windows allows diners views through the trees to the water and mountains beyond. Light wood predominates on the ceilings and walls, lending to the open, airy feel. The exquisitely plated food matched the chic room – presentation was tops throughout each course. Large white platterware, properly selected glassware for each wine selection, crisp linens, sharply attired service staff, and supple, stylish menus were all appreciated and added to the evening.

Taste – After the appetizing salad to start, we selected Grilled Salmon for our main. The tender filet came atop rich mashed potatoes and young spring vegetables. The fresh salmon was cooked to perfection, accented with a tomato basil confit and finished with scallion oil. The confit lifted the grilled flavour of the fish and the complex whole was delicious. It went swimmingly well with our Quail's Gate Special Selection Pinot Noir,

with hints of vanilla and nutty-cherry fruit. At this point in the night every table in the room was taken and the stars were out. Though content to just sit and enjoy our wines, we couldn't say no to renowned Pastry Chef Bruno Feldeisen's creations and selected the Crème Brulee. If my eyes were shut I could have sworn I was eating toasted marshmallows – the vanilla beans imparting such a rich flavour, topped with a heady browned crust. The small round came with 2 different types of hazelnut cookies – a nice little touch. Even with our Americanos, I could have sunk off to pleasant slumber right then. Throughout the entire evening, service was excellent – and thanks to personable & knowledgeable Sommelier Brian Storen, by the table often to aid with selections. Next time though, I'll book an overnight stay so I can delve much deeper into his thorough, award winning cellar. Definitely a recommended night out, and absolutely amazing Dine Around value.

Arbutus Grille has quickly proven itself to be one of the major contenders for a special night out. The talent amassed in the kitchen and resort is highly impressive and all of their hard work seems to be paying off. Top notch West Coast cuisine in a top notch West Coast setting makes this a must visit.

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