

Dining In & Out

North by Northwest

Foodies, those that subscribe to all the food and wine magazines, or will find a reason to get on an airplane and jet thousands of miles to experience a new restaurant, know that the Portland, Oregon dining scene has become legendary in the past decade.

Any number of reasons can be attached to this culinary transformation. Certainly the nearby Willamette Valley wineries, arguably where the best pinot noir this side of Burgundy is grown, has been a defining force. An abundance of farm-to-table, fresh produce, cheese and seafood almost single-handedly has coined the term “locavore.” And while Northwest cuisine is *au courant*, one can’t ignore that Portland is, after-all, the birthplace of the *Father of American Gastronomy*, James Beard.

So when a recent business trip to visit with a few of the Willamette’s wineries required an overnight stay in Portland, I set out to explore the one restaurant that best epitomized this gastronomic revolution.



I always do my research for top dining destination when traveling, but over the years, I have come to rely on the recommendations of the hotel Concierge. Their reputations (and maybe even job security) depends on satisfied guests. So when I asked the young woman behind the desk at the Monaco Hotel, another gem in the Kimpton Hotel’s portfolio, she assured me that her number one choice was *Clarklewis*.

Just over the Willamette River, across the Morrison Bridge, in an area that has clearly been part of Portland’s downtown renaissance, *Clarklewis* is in a converted warehouse in the Industrial district of the city.

Aided by the opened garage door ambiance, the restaurant is both casual and upscale. Chef Dolan Lane’s open kitchen and wood fired oven are the first thing you encounter as you’re led to white-clothed tables amid a buzz of chatter and bustling, smiling waitstaff.

The Wine List, like the Dinner Menu, is small, but offers a number of fairly priced choices with an obvious leaning to Oregon’s finest vineyards. My first selection was the 2007 Bergstrom



“Sigrid” Chardonnay, one of the best white wines made in America today. We shared a number of appetizers, including the *Veridian White Bean Soup*, the *Oregon Rabbit Sausage*, and the *Arisan Cheese Plate* served with local honey crisp apples, fried almonds and quince paste.

To pair with our entrees of *Homemade Tagliatelle with Braised Lamb Ragu*, a *Orchiette with Local Chanterelles and Shaved Farm-raised Pork* from a nearby farm, and the *Provenance Spit-Roasted Chicken* from the wood oven, we were definitely in red wine territory. I couldn’t resist the delicious *Domaine Serene “Mark Bradford Pinot*, even though it is a wine I have enjoyed numerous times before.

So, if you’re ever in the area, discover what Meriwether Lewis and William Clark discovered some two centuries before. Oregon is one of the most beautiful regions of the US. Too bad Lewis and Clark’s namesake restaurant wasn’t yet open.

For more information on Clarklewis, or to reserve a table visit their website,

<http://www.clarklewis.com>

If your visit to the Portland area means an overnight stay, I recommend you consider one of the two Kimpton hotels in the area. <http://kimptonhotels.com>

Eat, drink and be merry!

Cheers,

Bruce