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Blu Jam Café

By Jill Weinlein, 6/02/2011

Café by Day, Bistro at Night

Walking into the Blu Jam Café off Melrose Avenue, we immediately noticed the colorful artwork hanging on the wall. I asked the owner/Executive Chef, Kamil Majer, about the whimsical pop art.



Blu Jam Cafe Chef and owner, Kamil Majer, turns his daytime cafe into a bustling bistro at night. (photo by Jill Weinlein)

"I display different artists each month to keep it fun," Majer said.

Fun is a good description of Blu Jam. Breakfast and lunch are served daily until 5 p.m. Then, the lights dim and the café is transformed into a bistro serving wine, beer and small plates to be shared around the table. "It's been a dream of mine to have a bistro at night," Majer said.

In the 80s, Majer arrived in the United States, having just finished Culinary School in his home country of the Czech Republic and found a job as a dishwasher at one of the finest hotels in Boston. He soon became a busboy, waiter and continued moving up the hospitality job chain.

When he tired of the cold weather, he arrived in Los Angeles and landed a job as the private butler for Nancy and Ronald Reagan when they stayed at the Century Plaza Hotel.

"President Reagan was nice, Nancy was tough," Majer laughed. "They stayed on the 33rd floor in the Presidential Suite a few nights before heading up to their ranch in Santa Barbara."

While talking to us, Majer patted backs and gave hugs and kisses to the numerous locals and regulars that strolled into his restaurant. He is very respected and well-liked, because he makes each guest feel welcomed and special.

As a world traveler, he prepares dishes from some of his favorite countries. We were excited to see beef goulash, crunchy brioche bites and Kamil's "fake" paella.

Our server Trip, showed off his mega-watt personality while explaining the menu to us.

"You must order the Argentinean Steak with crispy red potatoes in a chimichuri sauce. I just can't get enough of this dish," Trip said.



The asparagus salad topped with an organic egg is embellished with a thick red wine and chive aioli. (photo by Jill Weinlein)

We first started with a mac n' cheese amuse bouche. The spoon held macaroni pasta infused with black truffle oil, embellished with Niman Ranch bacon, aged cheddar and mozzarella cheese, then mixed with a dash of cream and chives sprinkled on top. This wonderful dish can be ordered to share as an appetizer, or a side dish.

Next the ceviche with shrimp marinated in lime juice, tomatoes, onions and cilantro

placed on a homemade crunchy corn tortilla with a dollop of chipotle aioli was presented at our table. It was very fresh and satisfying.

We also tried a new item listed on the menu, the burrata with fresh strawberries and micro greens on crunchy grilled bread and dressed in an aged balsamic reduced to a syrup. It was a sweeter take on the traditional bruschetta and could be served for dessert.

For a salad, we enjoyed the Riverdog farm asparagus sprinkled with herb bread crumbs and topped with a lovely organic egg, sunny side up, is embellished with a thick red wine and chive aioli.

Curious about the "fake" paella, we ordered the dish comprised of seared ahi tuna with a lemon gremolata on top of the "paella." Majer combines ground chorizo and adds olives, capers, and tomatoes into the risotto, the flavors enhancing the fresh tuna. With a dash of chili oil thrown in, it was an interesting twist to the popular Spanish dish.

The last dish we tried was the Argentinean Steak sliced thinly on top of red potatoes and covered in a chimichuri sauce. This sauce should be bottled and sold at the restaurant. It's made with olive oil with garlic, parsley, chili oil and red wine vinegar with salt and pepper. The red wine gives the dish its tartness and the sauce is absorbed into the potatoes that complements the meat superbly.

With hardly any room left for dessert, we opted for just one plate of the crunchy brioche bites with vanilla cream, fresh strawberries and a sprig of mint. It was a sweet ending to an International dining adventure.

Open 7 days a week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and dinner is served on Wed. to Sun. from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. \$\$ 7371 Melrose Ave. (323)951-9191.



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