

A Dining Affair

Elegant and innovative cuisine accompanied by world-class wines

Dining at the Banffshire Club (The Fairmont Banff Springs Hotel's signature restaurant) is a serious affair. The attention given to minute details is extraordinary and was instrumental in the Banffshire Club receiving the 5-Diamond award in 2005 from CAA/AAA.

At the table, you are lavishly greeted with bone china, crystal glasses, and elegant silverware. A choice of four different bottled waters is offered, as well as an assortment of bread with organic Jersey milk butter and



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a cheese spread. Your aperitif is served with delicious hors d'oeuvres, and a palate cleanser appears in between courses. With coffee, mignardises (small, sweet bites) adorn your table.

The à la carte menu (changing seasonally) is a concoction of unique ingredients prepared in innovative ways that requires your careful attention to compose your menu. It is priced at \$110 for two courses—add \$10 for each additional course. You may decide, instead, to leave all decisions to the staff by opting for the six-course tasting menu (changing monthly) at \$175; for an extra \$135, your meal is paired expertly with six different wines.

The à la carte choices from a recent Banffshire Club visit included the Smoked Salmon with Sevruga Caviar, Wasabi and Chili Oil, and an absolutely stunning Salsify Bisque with poached Sable Fish. The Alberta Bison Tenderloin and Braised Veal Cheek were so tender, no knife was needed. I could not resist the fresh White Asparagus served, to my delight, with Swiss Chard Tarts. Our taste buds were impressed by the synergy between the many different textures and flavours. It was per-

fect. The service is provided with politeness, professionalism, and an abundance of knowledge.

“The real trend is to use the freshest ingredients you can find anywhere and to offer the best in quality, presentation, and flavour,” says Daniel Buss, the thirty-five-year-old Swiss-trained Chef. “Everything has to be perfect as you would expect of a five-star restaurant,” adds Buss. It shows; his creativity is a gift that he has fully integrated to produce culinary masterpieces.

Chef Buss' quest for perfection recently resulted in a selection of twenty-five different cheeses to choose from. Another very innovative idea was to offer dessert samplers in groups of three.

The Banffshire Club's Wine Director, David Walker, passionately expresses, “The greatest wines in the world are a direct expression of the people and the places which produce them.” Walker and Chef Buss are dedicated to creating synergy between food and wine and to providing new discoveries for their guests. Walker has formalized his passion for wine by taking the ultimate challenge: he is scheduled to start the UK-based Master of Wine program. There, he will be among only a handful of Canadians, though he is well qualified for this undertaking as he graduated with distinction from the Wine and Spirit Education Trust Diploma program. Walker's sixty-five-page wine list, including over five-hundred different labels, will likely generate many prestigious awards for him. Although this list includes very rare wines such as the 1921 Chateau Yquem at \$9,500 a bottle, do not be intimidated as he offers wines starting at \$40 a bottle. He is particularly keen on wines from Canada, including Niagara where he trained with legendary wine maker Karl Kaiser.

Walker is assisted by seven sommelier staff members who are enrolled in the Wine and Spirit Education Trust program. Their expertise is illustrated by being able to sell Dom Perignon as an aperitif for \$85 a glass; other champagnes are available at \$20 a glass. What is even more exciting is the majority of wines are also available by the glass. Recently, according to Walker, a couple requested to taste a glass of the 1990 Chateau Lafite listed at \$1,700. The team had planned to sell the remaining two glasses to other patrons, but the couple enjoyed their \$425-a-glass wine so much that they emptied the whole bottle. Other rarities on the list include a forty-year-old single malt from Glenfiddich at \$150 per shot; or what about an ounce of the Courvoisier L'Esprit at \$225?

—Peter Blattmann