

where we've been...



Vaby's Picton

Magazine regular Lara Croft joined me for dinner at Vaby's in Picton midwinter. "I can't remember the last time we caught up," the action hero lamented. "It must be close to one year," I replied. "So much to talk about!"

It was a very cold Winter in Picton. I was excited to spy Lara sitting next to the open fire through the windows lining the slope to the restaurant. "Pole position!" I thought to myself. Vaby's occupies a gorgeous historic sandstone building. The open fire adds to the charm - and the warmth of course.

Our jackets luxuriously draped on our chairs we ordered drinks. "You have Stockade on tap don't you," I suggested to our waitress. "We sure do," she smiled before running through the options. Lara went for a pale ale and I opted for an XPA. Our local brewer makes exceptional craft beers and it's great to see Macarthur venues carrying the brand.

Our choice of drinks affected my entree choice. Oysters Kilpatrick and craft beer is a match made in heaven. It must be the saltiness of the Worcestershire Sauce and bacon. A dozen tasty molluscs later and we were ready for our main. When I asked our waitress about paella, Lara let out an audible, "yes!" She had been online to check out Vaby's menu and hoped I wanted to share a paella. Her enthusiasm was all the encouragement I needed. "Paella it is."

Paella is and always has been, Vaby's signature dish. I switched to a glass of Mondiale Shiraz, a medium weight, food friendly wine. Lara was

still making her way through her beer. We sat chatting and enjoying the warmth of the fire.

The paella arrived at our table and this dish provides for a spectacular arrival. A large black paella pan is loaded with saffron coloured yumminess and presented sitting in a cane basket. We hooked in! Prawns, calamari, chorizo, mussels, chicken... such a hearty dish. If you're hungry and desire heaps of flavour, get to Vaby's and order the paella for two. It's a big meal but very 'morish' - hard to stop even though you know you should.

Lara was keen for dessert. It's rare for me to have three courses but I know that Vaby's has a seriously good dessert menu, so, "OK, let's do this." Both our orders were from the Specials list so I am not sure if you can get them all the time. I ordered Lemon Curd Mousse, just because I had never seen it anywhere before. I was intrigued. I do love lemon curd though so that was a good start. Spoiler alert - it was sensational. I would order it again. Lara's apple and rhubarb crumble looked great too. A classic winter treat.

Vaby's is a fantastic family restaurant without the cliché that the chains commonly bring to this category. The staff are friendly and helpful, the room looks great and the food is wonderfully consistent. Highly recommended.