

"A journey through all things cool and yummy!"

# Forays of a Finance Foodie

Wednesday, September 28, 2011

## Going to Town at Towne Boston

By: Jessica Cickay

Lydia Shire and Jasper White are kind of like the Heidi Klum and Tim Gunn of the Boston restaurant scene – no matter the space, no matter the cuisine or no matter the clientele, they just make it work. Upon entering their year-old [Towne Stove and Spirits](#) nestled next to Hynes Convention Center in the Back Bay, it was pretty obvious that Shire and White could keep this valiant venture working for many more to come. The warm, relaxing décor washed everyone and everything aglow, while despite the menu's inherent priceyness, it was obvious that Towne already touted a healthy round of regulars– a true testament to the high-end, but low-maintenance restaurant's staying power. I was visiting on an evening dubbed "A Taste of Italy," and although I was surrounded by Ferrari's (literally) and had to walk a red carpet to enter (also literally), all I could focus on was what I was about to devour: Shire's signature Roman-inspired customizable four-course menu.



**All's Well That Ends Well.**

Our server Chuck went above and beyond the call of duty to describe the menu, first selling us on the Roasted Yellow Pepper Soup with Pecorino and Parsley Sformato, and Late Summer Tomatoes with Arugula. The soup was both bright in color and flavor, the smoky char of the roasted peppers playing off the cool undertones of the parsley sformato, which essentially was a creamy, herby mousse dotted with salty Pecorino, adding visual and textural appeal. In the simple salad, the tomatoes were fresh and tasted what tomatoes should taste like in September, earthy, heady and robust, and the peppery bite of arugula and drizzle of sweet, briny olive oil made the understated dish one to remember.



**Yellow Pepper Soup**



**Late Summer Tomatoes**

Next up came some of the best pasta dishes I've ever encountered in my 25 years, hands down. When I saw the Bucatini Amatriciana and Bucatini Vongole, or The Chosen Ones as I like to call them, coming

toward our table, I had to feign surprise when the dishes were placed before us. I knew, however, that there'd be no faking it when my taste buds were hit by the depth of flavor and quality of the ingredients to come, given Lydia Shire's red hot reputation in the restaurant world.



**Vongole**

The Amatriciana, a traditional Italian sauce made with dried pork cheek, pecorino and tomato, filled the perfectly prepared hollow spaghetti tubes with its strong, zesty flavor, while the Vongole was a velvety smooth red clam sauce accompanied by roasted grape tomatoes. The two sauces shone on their own, but utilizing the warm, crusty semolina and garlic studded bread from the basket to sop up Shire's divine Roman creations was one of the best decisions of the night.



**Amatriciana**

The levels of satisfaction, admiration and temptation were all kicked up another notch when it was time for our main courses. My boyfriend went for the Abbacchio, or Roman-inspired baby lamb cooked two ways – grilled with rosemary, anchovies and garlic, and braised in a deep red wine. The lamb duo sat atop creamy, rich corn meal and next to fresh-from-the-farm eggplant that Shire herself literally hand picked that morning.



**Abbacchio (Baby Lamb)**

I treated myself to the Grilled Whole Sea Bass with Heirloom Potatoes & Tomatoes “in cartoccio,” or in a pouch. Somehow Shire and her chefs managed to maintain the bass in full, but remove the bones, allowing my mouth to enjoy the simply grilled fish, studded with accents of garlic, lemon and rosemary, unfettered. The potatoes and tomatoes were soft and subtly sweet hiding in their parchment pouch, boasting a similar rosemary flavor profile to the fish. Both dishes, and also the appetizers and pasta, were ideally portioned, and if anything leaned on the larger side.



### Sea Bass

To end our trip to Rome – excuse me, Towne – we sampled the two dessert offerings for the evening. The Dark Chocolate Budino was a ramekin full of thick, rich, luscious chocolate pudding, but this wasn't your ordinary lunch box snack pack. This pudding packed a punch and clobbered any savory cravings you may have had left with full on chocolate flavor. A spot of whipped cream and a crackle of sea salt really sealed the deal with this bad boy Budino. The Buttermilk Panna Cotta may not have been as forward, but don't call this simple cooked cream shy. Similar to the Budino's wallop of chocolate flavor, the Panna Cotta reigned supreme in the vanilla department, with its stark white body boldly bulleted with black flecks, as if trying to remind you that vanilla doesn't back down easily.



**Panna Cotta**

The night started, continued and ended on a high note. From the atmosphere, to the service, to the chefs and most importantly to the food, Towne is definitely a boast-worthy gem in the Boston restaurant scene that will easily continue making it work in the trendy, but approachable, Back Bay space.

**Towne**  
900 Boylston Street  
Boston, MA 02115-3101  
(617) 247-0400

---