



Wolf in the Fog

150 Fourth St., Tofino | 250-725-9653 | wolfinthefog.com |



Shelora Sheldon



Wolf in the Fog's Rare Albacore Tuna with tomato, guanciale and espelette.

Opened by the crack team of Andre McGillivray, Jorge Barandiaran and chef Nick Nutting, Wolf in the Fog, Tofino's newest culinary venture, is quickly making waves. The three friends, who met working at The Pointe restaurant in the Wickaninnish Inn, have combined their years of expertise, creating a relaxed vibe and a menu motivated by the idea of "having dinner at a friend's on a Friday night."

The restaurant is twofold: the main floor Den, open early for coffee and pastries, lunch and drinks late-night, and the second floor dining room with patio seating, water views and a drop-dead gorgeous interior. Diners will find lots of natural light accented by warm wood throughout, leather banquettes, a long, inviting bar and open kitchen. Artists and artisans added the accents, including a 14-foot reclaimed-wood communal table, bird's-nest-like lighting fixtures of hand-torn fir veneer and the restaurant's wolf mascot crafted from driftwood. Food and drink are served on mismatched china and glassware, collected by the three during forays to thrift shops all over Vancouver Island. The effect is quirky and sparks conversation, creating, in my opinion, a convivial atmosphere.

Nutting's menu draws from the best of the region's farmers, fishers and foragers and being cut loose from the rigours of hotel dining has clearly inspired him. "My food is all over the map," he explains. "It's the greatest hits of all the things I want to eat right now!"

There's potato-crust oysters, served over a silken sweet corn puree with a hint of truffle; a seared Albacore salad served with house guanciale, espelette pepper and orange; and a revelatory beef tartare that forgoes the classic raw egg and seasonings for North African spices, peanuts and herb-flecked yogurt. These hits I could eat at any time.

Whether or not you're with friends or it's a Friday night, the menu's let's-get-together spirit is best expressed in the thematic sharing plates. The Spanish Picnic consists of West Coast mussels, octopus and pan-seared lingcod with nugget potatoes atop a more-ish Catalan romesco sauce, one built around roasted red peppers and ground almonds. The house focaccia comes in handy for getting every last morsel.

The wine list is affordable and approachable with lots by the glass, chosen for their food-friendliness. Hailey Pasemko oversees the spirits side of the menu, offering up flavourful twists on classic cocktails using infusions, herbs and bitters, as well as Tofino-esque touches such as cedar berries and salmonberries. Friends can indulge in the sharing punch bowls created for two to six people, served in vintage punch bowls.

The sweet finish, dreamt up by pastry chef Joel Ashmore, is a playful selection that draws inspiration from the soda fountain. Think hot fudge sundaes complete with nuts and cherries, butterscotch brûlée and double chocolate pavés. I enjoyed the summer parfait of tart lemon curd layered with olive oil Madeleine crumbs and topped with a bouffant of torched meringue that tasted like marshmallows.

From day to night, Wolf in the Fog will have you howling at the moon. **BY SHELORA SHELDAN**