

THE FINEST ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN OF THE CHESAPEAKE REGION

ANNAPOLIS HOME



Cruise Control

SAVOR EASTON

**A HOME WITH A WEDNESDAY ROOM
RESTAURANT CRITIC: BAS ROUGE**

Vol. 13, No. 4 2022



Straight Up on
Dining Out



Photo by Nicole Franzen

Bas Rouge:

Stolen Moments

By Christine Fillat

Destination dining is a guilty pleasure, supplying cherished stolen moments on a lazy summer day. Imagine lunch. A small town on the eastern shore. Maybe you are on your way to the beach or desire a quick getaway designed to completely transport you for just a couple of hours. Bas Rouge in Easton is the ideal target on this sweltering summer day: an unseen hand whisking us into its cool, comfortable environs. This is indeed a stolen moment and one that requires savoring.

A light breeze wafts through the room. The lighting is gentle, and soft music lends itself to conversations. This is a well-thought-out interior.

The dining rooms are elegant with crown molding, and picture frame wall molding giving the room a European architectural sensibility. All the details are of quality, from the big plate glass windows (for watching the street scene) to the tile floors, lots of mirrors, and fine furniture. Heavy gold-framed hunting paintings are hung on the walls. Comfortable banquettes hug the corners, and there are cute little brass stools to perch handbags upon. Crisp linens are on the tables, with polished silverware and charming light stemware.

The front-of-the-house team is polite and rather stylish, the women in black Prada dresses, the men dressed in suits. There is an air of authority tempered with kindness.

We order a flute of Ellner rosé champagne and a glass of Pouilly-Fumé and are offered a selection of house-made breads: Italian, a sesame semolina, two types of sourdough, and slices of baguette. The breads are all fresh and very good.

A sextet of baked oysters on the half shell arrives, not looking very baked at all. "It's heated enough to make the butter melt," quips our server. The oysters are treated to a smattering of ramp butter, fermented Fresno Chile oil,

and Provençal bread crumbs. The oysters are absolutely delicious, plump and slippery, with a little bit of fire, some crunch from the dusting of bread crumbs, and plenty of brine in the shell.

The foie gras “cheesecake” is more like a dessert than an appetizer. It’s not cooked at all. The deft techniques used to create this dish involve pressing the foie gras into little pillows. The kitchen is having a little fun with us here, combining the savory with the sweet. The little pillows of foie gras are sprinkled with graham cracker crumbs and served with deliciously mysterious lemon ricotta and lingonberry gel. It is exquisite.

For entrées, the menu reflects the time of day, with some items that wouldn’t typically be offered at dinner: things like a cheeseburger and fish and chips. The chef is from England, our server explains, and he makes a very good fish and chips. The fish is flaky, with a delicately battered crust sitting atop a lovely bed of green pea purée, accompanied by batons of crisp French fries and the best tartar sauce we have ever had. Curry oil is a surprise ingredient that takes these fish and chips to a whole new stratosphere.

Chitarra is a dish that I always have to order whenever it is offered to me. Springy strands of homemade pasta are twirled with a spicy tomato and basil sauce and topped with parmigiana Reggiano curls. Toasted breadcrumbs provide crunch. This is a very satisfying pasta dish.

Desserts are worthy of exploring! Almond poppy seed orange coconut cake is gluten-free and super moist. The secret to the moist cake, says our server, is oranges that are simmered whole and then puréed and mixed into the cake batter. Served with coconut sorbet, we are wowed by this cake. It is incredible, indeed.

The kitchen makes homemade ice cream. The raspberry ice cream and maple walnut ice cream with roasted walnuts are absolutely perfect. The dessert menu includes a selection of hot teas. What a pleasant suggestion, to have a cup of tea with dessert. We choose Dream tea and Earl Grey tea served with lemon slices.

Bas Rouge stands on its own as a world-class restaurant. There is an air of authority here. You feel you are cared for with the graciousness of the staff. As evidenced by the steady stream of diners the day we visit, the restaurant has built a following and is deservedly appreciated. **AH**

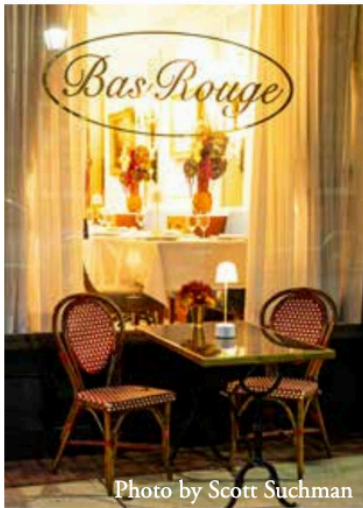


Photo by Scott Suchman

AHM Rating

Design & Décor



Food



Service



5 = truly memorable
2.5 = needs improvement
1 = forgettable

Lunch hours are on Thursdays and Fridays, 11:00 am until 2:00 pm, with an à la carte menu. Reservations are *de rigueur*.

Bas Rouge offers *prix fixe* dinners: three courses for \$100 or four courses for \$125, available Thursday and Friday, 5:30 pm until 9:00 pm, and Saturdays from 5:00 pm until 9:00 pm.

Bas Rouge
19 Federal Street
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