

Stuart's KITCHEN

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Simon's open kitchen, where patrons can hear, and often see, their food being prepared is a Stuart Raymond trademark. So, too, the wood-flavoured grill that is, arguably, Raymond's favourite culinary tool. (At one time Simon's imported 3,000 pounds of mesquite wood chips each month from Hollis, Oklahoma; Raymond has since found a Canadian supplier.)

And mesquite is just one of the details Raymond has sourced in his relentless pursuit of culinary perfection.

"I only cook with the best," he says bluntly. "No mediocre ingredients. I have buyers all over the world—New Zealand, Australia, New York, Vancouver."

Another Simon's trademark is the huge loaf of braided Italian bread arrayed in front of the kitchen. A fresh loaf is trucked up from Molisanna's Bakery in Toronto every other day. Besides providing diners with a unique conversation piece, not to mention their daily bread, any unused portions of the loaf have a myriad of other uses: as bruschetta, croutons, and coatings.

A new menu was introduced this fall. Dinner entrees include goat curry, a vegetarian curry, and fresh filet of Atlantic salmon along with menu all-stars such as certified Angus beef rib steak, pork back ribs, pork tenderloin with black tiger shrimp, and veal scaloppini.

"Look, if you don't change, adapt, and grow, boredom sets in, with your guests and your staff, and then you have a problem," says Raymond.

What does the future hold for one of Greater Sudbury's most enduring eateries? This fall Raymond will introduce a live cooking program on Saturday afternoons that can be viewed from Simon's website. People will also be able to download and watch previous programs at their leisure.

And in the new year, "Watch for Simon's By Night in our new home," says Raymond. **SL**

RESTAURANT REVIEW

By Lyda Barsh



Casey's taken over from Tommy

Tommy's Not Here, 1889 Regent St. S. 522-2822

Tommy's Not Here is the haunt of a slew of loyal customers and upon my visit, I quickly realized why.

Located in the basement of the House of Kin at the Four Corners, my guest and I were warmly greeted and escorted to our table in a welcoming manner. The décor is warm and cozy something that I commend considering we were entering the basement. What surprised me was the lack of table linens to create that "upscale eatery" theme that the owners have clearly established.

We were approached by a knowledgeable waiter who reviewed the specials which included an aged Black Angus striploin, Ahi tuna, and a stuffed Portabello mushroom appetizer. The dinner menu is diverse and would suit everyone's taste. From pasta, to steak, chicken, and the fish special-of-the-day, taste buds will be tempted by the menu.

The wine list offers a variety of vintage Cabernets, whites, sparkling and "by the glass" offerings served to accommodate all budgets and tastes. We chose to "live on the edge" with a Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon from the Camus Vineyards. If you ever have the opportunity to sip on this "chocolate sundae" of wines, do not pass on it. Kudos to the restaurant for maintaining such a satisfying wine menu!

Our server did not hover but rather provided us with just the right amount of time to select our starters. We shared the stuffed Portabello with prosciutto, peppers, goat cheese and scallops (\$12) and the Portabello mushroom crostini which is pesto-infused goat cheese, roasted red

peppers, diced Portabello mushrooms, drizzled with a raspberry and balsamic coulis on a toasted crostini (\$11). The starters were delivered promptly but both were lukewarm and definitely compromised the experience. Nonetheless, the appetizer still delivered a memorable combination of flavour and spices.

We never felt rushed through our meal. We waited to select and order our main entrée, and our server obliged us. There is a genuine desire to accommodate the customer.

When we were finally ready to order entrées, it was a certified Black Angus striploin (\$29) served with fresh vegetables and sweet potatoes, and the chicken Provincial, which is a lightly floured chicken breast poached in a saffron butter and Pernod Liqueur broth, meddled with shallots, artichokes hearts, spinach, bell peppers and grilled fennel (\$21).

The chicken was tender and the combination of saffron and the aniseed scent permeated the meat and the vegetables of this dish. This entrée proves poultry can be served to those wanting both a health conscious meal and a decadent treat!

The striploin steak was served tender, juicy and mouth-watering. The restaurant has developed a reputation for serving premium cuts cooked to taste and this evening's sample served up a "home run." Both entrées were prepared and served with care and attention to presentation.

I wish we had room for dessert after viewing the decadent menu of sweet temptations and specialty coffees, but we'll save that for next time. A few words of "thanks for coming" by the owner Casey Boyuk, who took over from his dad, Tommy, a couple of years ago, was the perfect ending to an incredibly enjoyable evening.



RATED 4 FORKS OUT OF 5