

Basso Café Restaurant in Norwalk Adds Wine Bar + New Menu

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Several years ago CTbites visited [Basso Café Restaurant](#) on New Canaan Avenue in Norwalk and was very impressed with many of the dishes created by Owner / Chef Renato Donzelli. Since that time Chef Renato has maintained his vision of creating a wine bar to complement the food, and that is now a reality as Basso Café Restaurant is now Basso Café Restaurant Wine Bar.

The interior has been updated with large, vibrant paintings along one wall, smaller modern pieces along the other wall overseeing the 60 seat dining area. The lighting is soft and inviting and acoustical tiles have been installed to reduce the noise level. After the recent receipt of a full liquor license, guests can now benefit from Chef Renato's pairing of wines to balance the vibrant flavors of his cuisine and the rear of the **restaurant now showcases the bar area with a selection of personally selected spirits, including organic vodkas.**

The new wine list features twelve reds and a similar number of white, plus sparkling selections. Each was selected to pair with items on the menu. The prices range primarily from \$30 through \$70 with most of the labels available by the glass for \$9-12. Guests can still bring their own bottles of wine with a revised \$25 corkage fee.

CTbites was invited to sample the newest menu prior to the formal re-opening and was very impressed. The cuisine still reflects the chef's Venezuelan roots combined with his upbringing in southern Italy. It offers selections for every palate, some bright, some bold, some mellow...Chef Renato constructs the menu carefully and thoughtfully.



The “Brie Croquettes” were served with a passion fruit and ginger sauce, drizzled with white truffle oil and finished with droplets of Balsamic vinegar. They were slightly coated in bread crumbs and fried to present a textural difference with a crispy exterior and a slightly melting interior. The mildness of the brie was complemented by the sweetness of the passion fruit and further elevated by the earthiness of the truffle oil. The Balsamic added a sweet-sour component.





The “Pork Belly” was topped with crispy crackling and served alongside pearl onions, a sweet pea purée and finished with agrodolce. The richness of the belly was beautifully complemented by the outstanding sweet-sour agrodolce and pearl onions, this was a perfect combination. The pea purée brought additional creaminess and a touch of sweetness and a great balance to the agrodolce. The crackling was chewy and I preferred the dish without it.



A current appetizer special is a small filet of “Tuna Belly.” Served “cooked through” and glazed with Dijon mustard and chopped pistachios, this interesting combination balanced the nuttiness of the pistachios spiced with the mustard. It was served atop diced capers and orange zest that complemented the other ingredients.



My favorite of the entrées was the “Filet Mignon.” An eight-ounce filet was wrapped in pancetta and topped with a chanterelle and shitake mushroom duxelle, a potato cake and a dollop of sour cream, and nestled in a Cabernet reduction. The steak was prepared to my requested medium-rare and was rich in flavor with a soft texture. The pancetta added a lovely smokiness and saltiness, the mushrooms a wonderful earthiness and the luscious Cabernet reduction was enhanced by the addition of veal stock. The creative addition of the potato cake and cream added a crispy and creamy addition. This is highly recommended.



The “Maine Diver Scallops” were served over a creamy polenta and topped with a watercress and ruby red grapefruit salad and a drizzle of black truffle vinaigrette. The four U-10 scallops were perfectly cooked, seared on the exterior with just the slightest of opaqueness in the center and seasoned with salt and pepper. The polenta was full flavored from pancetta and diced mushrooms and offered a nice land-sea balance. The grapefruit segments brought acidity and brightness to the presentation



Those with a hearty appetite will enjoy the “Tuscan Grilled Chicken Under a Brick.” A half chicken is de-boned, marinated and grilled and served with roasted garlic mashed potatoes, sautéed baby carrots and beets and finished with a lemon and rosemary sauce. The “brick technique” created a wonderfully crispy skin that enveloped a soft and moist chicken. The lemon and rosemary sauce was delicious and the mashed potatoes were full of flavor and ultra-creamy. The simply sautéed vegetables added a lovely earthiness to the presentation.



Save room for dessert since the “Tartallete of Duce de Leche” is one of the best desserts in the area. The tartallete was filled with an outstanding duce de Leche and the coated with a chocolate ganache. Sitting alongside the tartallete was a scoop of one of the best house-made vanilla ice creams I have tasted. The last component was a raspberry reduction that added just a hint of additional sweetness. There are a couple of Venezuelan chocolate ribbons that were fantastic.

Overall Basso Café Restaurant Wine Bar is still serving a wonderful selection of dishes that combine various flavor components. From the brightness of the passion fruit sauce on the croquettes to the rich, wonderful filet ingredients, each was a finely composed presentation. I look forward to returning to sample more of the Chef's creative and thoughtful cuisine.

124 New Canaan Ave, Norwalk, CT 06850

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Really Liked

- Pork Belly (\$11)
- Filet Mignon (\$36)
- Scallops (\$32)
- Tuscan Grilled Chicken (\$24)
- Tartallete of Duce de Leche (\$14)

Liked

- Brie Croquettes (\$11)
- Coliflor al Pimenton (\$8)

Not a Fan

- Tuna Belly

 zomato

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