



## TASTY GRILLED DOLPHIN

JOHN HOOK AT 1:51 PM ON JULY 26, 2010



Photo by Katherine Hook

My most recent mahi encounter took place in downtown Alvin at the newly opened The Barbed Rose. I have been curiously awaiting its entrance into the Greater Houston upscale dining club for several months and we patiently waited all of 6 days after opening to check out this geographically unexpected item. My previous half dozen or so culinary adventures within Alvin's gravitational pull had a depressing effect on my expectation bar, regardless of The Barbed Rose's pre-opening press. Their chef had nice credentials and the advance menu was intriguing, but it's in Alvin for goodness sakes. My post visit bottom line is that you know that you're in Alvin until the first bite, and it's so good that you don't care where you are after that.

We felt duty bound to survey the menu, so we started with their andouille stuffed quail. One of the several informative visits by staff revealed that they build their andouille, pancetta and bacon on site and they are doing it well.

The andouille was excellent, as was the essence of bacon that permeated their bread. The quail/smoked pork partnership worked quite well and we moved on through strong salads with their smoke and fire vinaigrette creating a nice memory.

TBR gives you various sauce and accompaniment options with each entrée and I chose to pair their chick pea salad with my mahi. No particular reason other than my weakness for Mediterranean food pushes me towards those hummus precursors whenever the opportunity presents. Salad was perhaps a misnomer, as acknowledged by the chef on his visit to our table. It was served warm with sweated sweet onion and, in spite of any nomenclatural issue, made a very nice platform for the grilled center cut fillet. Mahi does not do well with too much heat and Chef Jason Chaney used appropriate restraint in turning out as good a chunk of tasty grilled dorado as I've had anywhere.



Photo by Katherine Hook: Quail stuffed with andouille and crawfish, very nice.

My dining partner chose the lamb rack even though I had my fingers crossed that she would choose the axis loin. TBR serves several game options and, with axis being arguably the best of the venison varieties, I really wanted to test drive theirs. Ownership representative Joseph Schneider sealed the deal on her lamb choice with his enthusiastic recommendation so I'll just order the axis myself next time.



Photo by Katherine Hook

Her lamb was a very generous 3 rib portion and it was everything that she wanted it to be. We finished with a hybridization of bananas Foster and bread pudding accompanied by their own label coffee presented at the table via French press. That was a very nice finish indeed.



Photo by Katherine Hook: Bananas Foster-Bread Pudding, yeah it's that good!

We very much enjoyed our jaunt over to Alvin to visit The Barbed Rose. The drive was pleasant, the restaurant atmosphere was a refreshing change to what you frequently experience in upscale eateries, and it allowed Chef Chaney to demonstrate once again just how tasty a dolphin can be.