

The NEW Versailles Bistro & Patisserie in Greenwich - From the Owners of Méli-Mélo

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Almost a year ago, without notice or forewarning, a “For Sale” sign appeared on the window of Versailles Restaurant in Greenwich. At 6:15AM the following morning, Marc Penvenne was driving his usual route down Greenwich Avenue to his restaurant Méli-Mélo when he saw the sign. A few months earlier he started looking at several locations to open a second restaurant and now Versailles was available; he now knew the perfect location. Twenty years earlier, Penvenne was the manager at Versailles and left to open Méli-Mélo with his wife, Evelyne. Now, Marc and Evelyne are the proud owners of both Méli-Mélo and the re-invented Versailles Bistro and Patisserie.

When you enter the reimagined restaurant, the front area is a patisserie, complete with white marble-topped tables, bistro chairs and glass display cases filled with tantalizing pastries. Behind these cases is a coffee bar, serving some of the best café au lait in Greenwich. In the rear, the patisserie opens to a restaurant with bistro style dark wood tables and chairs plus a long leather lined banquette. The walls are adorned with photos of Paris and framed French posters dating from the first half of the 20th century.



While breakfast and lunch are served, the atmosphere is mellow and cheerful; in the evening the interior is transformed into a slightly more formal ambiance as the lights are lowered, table cloths are placed on the table and Le Diner is served. The menu reflects numerous bistro classics including a few lunch items that are served at the sister location, and Penvenne told CTbites, “We want Versailles to offer a different type of experience.”

Overseeing the kitchen is Chef Cedric Lamouille, who graduated from the French culinary school, Thonon Les Bains. Cedric worked in a number of Parisian kitchens, including Bistrot de L’Etoile before joining the renowned Jean-Louis in Greenwich, where he was chef. He joined Méli-Mélo in 2009 as executive catering chef and joined Versailles after it reopened.



We started our meal with the “Rillettes de Saumon, Noix, Endive, Trévisse, Vinaigrette de Grenade.” This was a delightfully pleasant salmon tartare served with caramelized walnuts, shaved endive and radicchio and finished with a pomegranate dressing. I really enjoyed the contrast between the smooth tartare and the crunchy shaved endive and radicchio. The walnuts were the secret ingredient and Penvenne told us that the recipe requires several days and different processes to obtain the texture and sweetness. The tartare was accented with finely diced onions that gave a slight pungency to the mild salmon.



My favorite entrée was the “Boeuf Bourguignon, Parpadelle.” Large pieces of slowly braised beef were served in one of the best red wine sauces I have ever tasted. The beef was moist, tender and rich in flavor from the red wine. The sauce was delicious and included sliced mushrooms and large slices of carrots, plus an unusual ingredient, celery slices.

The “Confit de Canard, Chou Rouge, Pommes de Terre Sautées” was very good but salty. The thigh-leg section was perfectly prepared, the meat was rich and succulent and the skin was crispy. As much as the meat and skin were delicious, the saltiness distracted from the overall dish. It was served with red cabbage and sautéed potatoes. The cabbage was a great complement to the duck and the potatoes were excellent, crispy on the exterior and moist and tender on the interior.



The “Carrelet “Colbert” Persil Frit, Pommes Vapeur” was not my favorite. Three flounder fillets were lightly breaded and pan fried and served with a mélange of vegetables including potatoes, sweet potatoes, cherry tomatoes, broccoli and cauliflower. The dish was finished with slices of tarragon infused butter. The sautéed flounder was bland and while the vegetables were well cooked, they would have benefitted from more seasoning.



Save room for dessert...the pastries are outstanding. They are all prepared on premises by one of the four fulltime bakers. The “Pont Neuf,” originally created by François Payard, consisted of Tartatin style toffee apples sitting on layers of pate feuilletée and topped with caramelized mousseline, and chiboust cream before crisping the exterior a la crème brûlée. The buttery dough was delicious, the apples were fantastic, and the crème was a perfect addition. This was one of the best pastries I have ever eaten. The “Napoléon” contained of two layers of mille-feuille puff pastry intermingled with thick layers of chiboust cream, and then sprinkled with sugar powder and a cacao powder stencil. The cream was decadent and the puff pastry was delightful and offered a crispy contrast to the smooth pastry cream. It has been a very long time since I have had a Napoléon as good as this rendition.

Versailles offers classical bistro fare within a patisserie feel during the day and a relaxed bistro atmosphere in the evening. The pastries are fantastic, worth a visit to enjoy with a cup of coffee or select a variety to share with friends and family at home. Most of the dishes I tasted were very good while others needed a little more focus on the seasoning. Versailles will become an excellent choice for bistro fare in Fairfield County when the food is more consistently seasoned.

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<http://versaillesgreenwich.com/>

Really Liked

- Rillettes de Saumon, Noix, Endive, Trévisse, Vinaigrette de Grenade (\$15.50)
- Boeuf Bourguignon, Parpadelle (\$28)
- Pont Neuf
- Napoléon

Liked

- Confit de Canard, Chou Rouge, Pommes de Terre Sautées (\$28)

Did Not Like

- Carrelet “Colbert” Persil Frit, Pommes Vapeur (\$24)