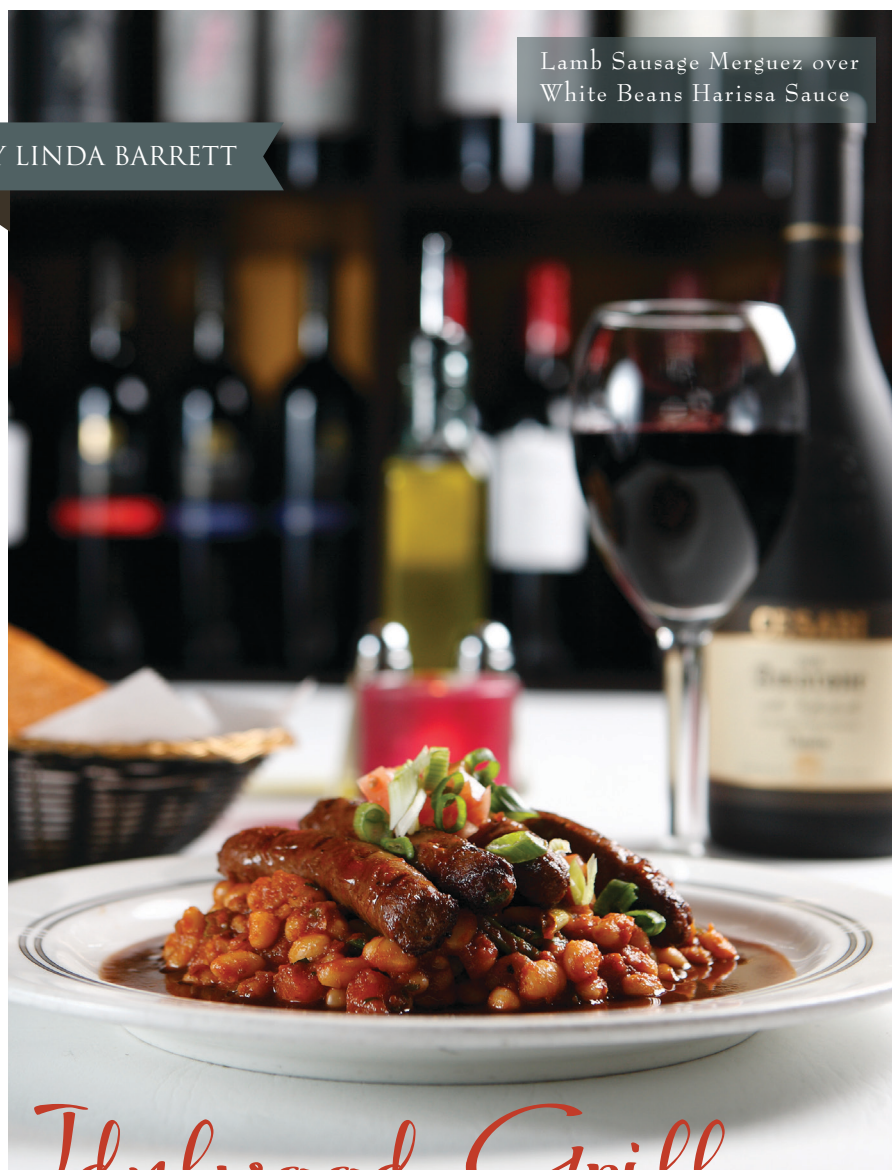




Lamb Sausage Merguez over
White Beans Harissa Sauce

BY LINDA BARRETT



Idylwood Grill & Wine Bar

GREAT FOOD, GREAT WINE, GREAT FRIENDS

If the welcoming greeting my friend and I received at the door was any indication of the experience we would have at **Idylwood Grill and Wine Bar**, we knew it would be a great evening.

Owner Hedi Ben-Abdallah and manager Marco Escudero invited us into their restaurant as if we were old friends, which we soon became.

Ben-Abdallah even said, “We want to be your best friend, someone you would be proud to introduce to your friends, family, and colleagues.”

We didn’t realize then that he actually meant it ... or that we would.

Tucked into Idylwood Plaza, Idylwood Grill transcends the typical neighborhood restaurant to offer delicious French-Italian cuisine.

“We are passionate about good food, good wine, and good service,” Ben-Abdallah said, and then proceeded to prove all three.

The restaurant itself is equally inviting, yet intimate with its Tuscan-yellow walls, white tablecloths, and café chairs. Look carefully, and you’ll see touches from their native countries of Tunisia and Peru.

We were offered two menus for dinner: the regular menu and a list of Weekly Specials. If you can’t decide, they make it easy. Simply choose one of the highlighted customer favorites.

For our appetizers, we ordered the lamb sausage “merguez,” several sausages nestled into a bed of navy beans with a tomato harissa sauce, highlighted with a red wine demi-glace. We used the freshly-baked barbari bread, a Persian flatbread made fresh daily next door, to scoop up every delicious drop.

We also enjoyed the fresh Prince Edward Island mussels served in a marinara with white wine, lemon juice, butter, capers and herbs, and the house-favorite shrimp ajo, sautéed jumbo shrimp in a grape tomato, lemon garlic sauce.

As the entrees were delivered, we paused to savor the mouthwatering aromas that enveloped our table. From the Weekly Specials menu, we ordered the lamb shank risotto, a red wine-braised lamb hind shank served over shitake mushrooms and lemon risotto, topped with a spring mix of lettuces, and complemented by a red wine lamb au jus sauce. The lamb shank was slow cooked throughout the day and so tender that it literally fell off the bone as we took our first bites. Of course we had to share!



Lemon-Pepper Tilapia

From the regular menu, the blackened scallops risotto caught my eye, and it was served with several of the largest and most tender diver scallops I have ever enjoyed, lightly blackened and sautéed and served over lemon risotto with shiitake mushrooms and spinach. For both dishes the risotto was cooked to a perfect tenderness with just the slightest hint of lemon.

The chef couldn't resist sending out a taste of his ceviche special, so we had to try that too—a corn tostada topped with tilapia, shrimp, cilantro, red onion, and fresh

lime juice and served with corn. Quite refreshing.

We were already so full from the generous portions that we almost didn't order dessert ... until we were tempted by the house-made dessert menu. OK, we had to. We ordered the light and heavenly tiramisu and the rich chocolate mousse cake.

Everything paired perfectly with the red wine Ben-Abdallah recommended: a Clos de Taman 2012 from the French wine region of Cotes du Rhône Villages Laudun, even our desserts.

Since the restaurant also has “wine bar” in its name, you can expect a wonderfully large wine list, with some wines offered by the glass.

“I personally taste every wine I bring in,” Ben-Abdallah said.

Visit on Sundays where most wines are featured at half price all day.

Idylwood Grill is open for lunch Monday through Friday 11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.; dinner, Monday through Thursday from 5 – 9:30 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 5 – 10 p.m., and Sunday from 5 – 9 p.m.; and brunch on Sunday from 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. Dine between 5 and 6:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday for a 20 percent early-seating discount.

Friends that we now were, Hedi Ben-Abdallah revealed a little-known fact (that ought to be better known) while we were dining. He is the creator and star of “Uncorked with Hedi,” a creative and funny wine education video. You can see his pilot at www.idylwoodgrill.com.

Great food, great wine, great friends — we'll definitely return. We can't wait to see what new deliciousness Idylwood Grill has cooked up next. ♦

Idylwood Grill
2190 Pimmit Drive
Falls Church, VA 22043
703-992-0915

SPECIAL OFFERS

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