

Grille 620 at Holiday Inn is a delectable destination

BY JANICE OKUN - News Restaurant Reviewer

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Charles Lewis/Buffalo News
Jennifer Sarago displays a dish of portobello mushrooms, chicken and artichoke hearts with fettucine tossed with a pesto-gorgonzola cream sauce, the Friday night special at Grille 620, a new fine dining establishment in the Holiday Inn on Delaware Avenue.

People kept telling me I'd be surprised when I ate dinner at Grille 620, in the Delaware Avenue Holiday Inn. Usually I'm not much for motel dining rooms. But there's been a movement afoot in this country for quite some time to serve better than average fare in big metropolitan hotels so, I figured, maybe that fits in with that concept.

This particular HI is owned by Hart Hotels, owner also of the fine David's Grille in Orchard Park. That fact alone made it sound interesting.

This is a comfortable restaurant. Decorated in a restrained manner, it rises on tiers above the central bar. Handsome looking blinds are employed to block the view which, not too surprisingly, is of the parking lot.

The dinner menu here is not large but it's obviously been chosen with care. (And a little intensive guidance from the Orchard Park restaurant, too, I'm told.) Nine different entrees; eight apps and a selection of really good breads and spreads — everything showing up at the table on trendy rectangular plates and all of them with upscale presentation.

Pan Seared Scallops (\$11) started off the meal. Three largish sea scallops were served with a very delicate and balanced Limoncello Saffron Sauce. Bourbon Glazed Bacon Wrapped Shrimp for the same price were fairly tiny crustaceans and their size might have caused them to be just the slightest bit chewy and dry. I did like the Chili Cream Sauce they rested on.

Tuscan Chicken (\$22) was really a winner — we were on a roll. This was an extremely vertical, extremely impressive-looking plate. Pan fried double chicken breasts were moist and juicy and heaped with fresh tasting spinach, artichoke hearts and mushrooms. And all of that was heaped on couscous. And did I forget the Lemon Caper Sauce?

Highly recommended. We did come back to earth, however, with Wild Mushroom Ravioli (\$21) — not over plumply filled pasta squares that sort of lay there on the plate — looking — well, looking sort of discouraged

somehow.

Strips of red pepper tried valiantly to brighten things up but it was a lost cause from the word go. The Ravioli came with Pesto Cream Sauce, incidentally. Some of the other entrees would definitely appeal to a tired business person (or restaurant critic — take your pick). Sesame Crusted Ahi Tuna with brown rice and vegetables stir fry (\$27), New York Strip (\$34), Rack of Lamb with pistachio pesto mint cream sauce (\$30).

Other appetizers include Mussels sauteed in white wine and fresh fennel (\$12) and Eggplant Strata (\$10). Desserts come from Butterwood and are, as usual, satisfying. •

GRILLE 620

★★★

WHERE: 620 Delaware Ave. in the Holiday Inn (886- 2121), www.hibuffalodowntown.com . This pleasant dining room may come as a surprise to those who don't expect much from a chain motel. So stop that laughing. Credit Cards: American Express, MasterCard, Visa.

FAVORITE DISH: Tuscan Chicken.

NEEDS WORK: Wild Mushroom Ravioli.

PRICE RANGE: Dinner entrees from \$22.

SERVICE: Very good.

HOURS: Breakfast, 6: 30 to 11 a. m. Monday through Friday; 7 a. m. to noon on weekends. Dinner, seven days 5 to 10 p. m.

WHEELCHAIR ACCESS: Yes

PARKING: In the lot.

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