

# EAT

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER  
2007CELEBRATING THE FOOD & DRINK OF  
**BRITISH COLUMBIA**  
| VANCOUVER | VICTORIA | THE ISLAND |  
| THE OKANAGAN |

EAT WELL // LIVE SMART

## James Joyce Bistro and Peacock Billiards

**W**elcome to the new and classy home of Peacock Billiards and the James Joyce Bistro. Open 24/7, this high-end pool hall and sophisticated bistro is a shrine to the Irish author. The bistro is comfortably decorated with overstuffed booths upholstered in a peacock-printed fabric, leather couches and hand-painted circular tables adorned with quotes from Joyce's works. The seating is intimate yet open to the rest of the space.

The Joyce connection isn't a gimmick. Proprietor David Peacock has been studying Joyce's 1922 opus *Ulysses* for the past decade; collaborator Robert Amos's interests lie in the author's final work, *Finnegans Wake*. Peacock commissioned the well-known Victoria artist to paint the decor for the restaurant using a style Amos has developed based on Chinese and Japanese calligraphy.

The menu offers a wide assortment of tapas – or social plates – salads, pizzas and desserts. We began our meal with tender, juicy, Asian-inspired beef short ribs with a red wine barbecue glaze, pickled ginger and scallions. Delicious. The maple-roasted pear salad with prosciutto and wine-poached figs caught my attention immediately, but I was a bit disappointed. The salad wanted preparing in a way that combined the flavours better; as it was, each item was set atop a bed of greens and there was little to bind them together. My husband had his eye on the bacon-wrapped oysters, served with a delicate tartar sauce with fresh lemon. The dish was well balanced, but the oysters were cooked and hot and we prefer the texture of cold, raw or smoked oysters. One of the highlights of the meal was the smoked albacore tuna medallions with puree of beet and mayo salad. The fish was moist and flaky with a vibrant, distinct smoky flavour and was well paired with the mild taste of the beet salad.

Our dining companion ordered one of the pizzas, which turned out to be the finest choice of the evening, and she said it was, by far, the best pizza she'd had since leaving Montreal and Toronto years ago. This one was a wonderful combination of Italian sausage, chunks of real ham, bacon, honey-roasted fennel and three cheeses topped with a dollop of lightly dressed baby greens. Very satisfying and remarkably filling, I savoured every delicious bite I could steal. The toppings were generous, the crust was just the right thickness - not too thin that you needed a knife and fork, but not too chewy either - and the fennel offered a nice surprise in combination with the tangy cheeses. As you know, one of the four major food groups is dessert and dessert here was worthy of its own category. We tried the cherry-topped hazelnut torte with orange cream and the trio of truffles. The hazelnut tasted almost like chocolate without being too rich. The truffles were melt-in-your-mouth fabulous; white chocolate, milk chocolate and dark chocolate, one to satisfy each kind of craving.

Full and definitely happy, we left without even venturing into the pool hall. So we will be back to try a few of the other dishes that were highly recommended – the seafood cakes, the baked artichokes and, of course, to try our hand at a game of pool. –*Tammy Simon*