

Luxury in Lunenburg

By Jan Napier



Photos by Jan Napier

Bold, beautiful and bright ideas have come to fruition on King Street in Lunenburg thanks to business owners Susan and Guenther Reibling. You'll want to extend your next visit because there is ever more to see and do and all that with a UNESCO World Heritage Site as the backdrop. Cruise the biking trails, take a chef's tour of the farmers market, sit in the infrared detox sauna (as seen on Oprah) at EmOcean Spa, take a boat tour, shop, play golf, and don't miss King Street.

At the top of the street you have the newly renovated and decorated **Mariner King Historic Inn**. Stay there and you truly will feel like royalty in sumptuous, exquisite surroundings. Chef Konrad is making his culinary mark there where the "King's Plate" offers high tea and dinner. They'll also provide everything you need for a gourmet picnic and direct you to a little known beach.

At the bottom of the street is **Cilantro the Cooks Shop** where you'll find the latest in kitchen gadgetry and cookware. But the fantastic news is that they are offering culinary instruction with guest chefs in their brand new Gaggenau kitchen classroom. I can't wait to attend a class; I expect it to be experiential tourism at its finest.

Centrestage, between the Inn and Cilantro, authentic Italian dining with modern flair awaits you at **Trattoria Della Nonna** Ristorante e Pizzeria. Chef Terry Vassallo, originally from Sydney Nova Scotia,

pours his heart and soul into the food of his Italian heritage. Recently named in “Where to Eat in Canada”, the atmosphere is a blend of romance, sophistication, and warmth with immaculate attention to detail. I’ve often said that my favourite reading material is a good menu and they’ve got a bestseller there. During a recent dining experience, it was so hard to choose from the extensive list of offerings which was pored over whilst nibbling on wood-fired cheese pizza that had been brought to the table. For an appetizer I had the *Barbabietola*, a salad with roasted local beets, baby greens, toasted pine nuts, crisp pancetta, lemon, goat cheese and chive dressing presented in a manner which was almost too beautiful to eat and as delicious as it looked. A shared portion of the calamari was without a doubt the best that I have ever had. That alone would bring me back. I sampled my dining companion’s appetizer *Agnello*, charbroiled lamb riblettes served with risotto with bacon, parmesan and leeks and a balsamic reduction. I can see why lamb is one of Chef’s Vassalo’s signature dishes because he prepares it to perfection. A popular main dish is the *Fettuccine Pollo Asiago*, chicken, asparagus and wild mushrooms in a garlic and asiago cream sauce and I savoured a generous portion. And as if all that wasn’t enough, I sampled a sliver of the *Pizza Bianco*. Complimenta alla cuoco (compliments to the chef)! Sommelier Simone Mombourquette has put together an extensive wine list and we were very pleased with our selections.

I am delighted to be able to share with you Chef Terry’s recipe for a spicy pasta dish, Mussels Puttanesca. Buon appetito!

Mussels Puttanesca

4 Tbs. olive oil
2 shallots, finely chopped
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 rib celery, finely diced
½ tsp. dried basil
½ tsp. dried oregano
1 bay leaf
Salt and pepper to taste

Heat oil, add ingredients and sauté until caramelized. Deglaze with 2 Tbs. red wine vinegar.

Add a 28 oz can whole Italian plum tomatoes. Stir to break up into smaller pieces. Add 2 Tbs. capers, 1/8 cup chopped pitted kalamata olives and 1/2 tsp. dried chili flakes.
Cook until reduced. Add one pound of fresh mussels and cover until mussels open.
Pour over your favourite pasta and enjoy!