

Hooray for souffles!

By JUNE NAYLOR

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The concept seemed rather high-falutin', on the face of it. A restaurant with a menu composed primarily of souffles? The very idea seemed as puffed-up as the product itself.

But the truth is, the entire experience that is Rise works really well. When good food, honest presentation and authentic style blend flawlessly for a positive effect, it doesn't really matter what's on the menu.

Encountering a lovely but simple menu, however, was just one reason my party of four found this thoroughly French bistro utterly charming. A couple of my tablemates didn't consider themselves souffle fans, yet we each came away impressed.

Opened in Dallas' vibrant Inwood Village in mid-January, Rise No. 1 is the creation of Hedda Dowd, a longtime dealer in French antiques and the child of a Frenchwoman. After falling in love with a little restaurant in Paris, Dowd was determined to re-create its spirit and souffle-laden menu at home in Dallas. It took her well over a year to persuade restaurateur Mark Maguire to jump in, but she'd already won over his chef at Maguire's in north Dallas, Cherif Brahmi, a Lyon native and lifelong friend of Dowd's.

The food is so good that your thoughts happily drift back to your dinner several days later; the service is polished but relaxed; and the spirit of the restaurant transports you to a chic but casual salon somewhere in the French countryside.

All of which is ideal for enjoying the steamed artichoke appetizer (\$10), splayed open with the prickly leaf-ends clipped away and a warm lemon-butter-herb dip filling the center. This pairs beautifully with a bottle of 2006 Martin Codax Albarino Rias Baixas, a light Spanish white (\$23).

The smoked-salmon souffle (\$15) was a feather-light entree, a lightly browned cloud that bore a perfect balance of delicate creaminess with hints of the salty, smoky fish. The truffle-infused wild mushroom souffle (\$15) held an intoxicating earthy flavor, but our serving had fallen, pulled down by the density of the ingredients.

Rise also does a bang-up job with its salad Nicoise (\$15), a beautiful plate of crunchy greens topped with pieces of roasted potato, crispy haricots verts (green beans), tomato, capers, briny olives and slices of sesame-crust seared ahi tuna.

A bigger appetite is satisfied by the thick beef filet (\$29), served with roasted fingerling potatoes and a mild, lush bearnaise sauce. If you still have room, tuck into one of the sweet souffles (\$10 each).

Rise No. 1

5360 W. Lovers Lane

Suite 220

Dallas

214-366-9900

www.risesouffle.com

Hours: Open 11 a.m.-11 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday; 11 a.m.-midnight Friday-Saturday; 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Sunday

Cuisine: French salon

Essentials: Major credit cards; full bar; smoke-free; wheelchair-accessible

Entree cost: \$12-\$33

Signature dishes: souffles

Recommended for: Francophiles

Good to know: Reservations accepted for parties of six or more; arrive early or late to avoid waiting for a table; bring extra money for shopping