





**SECOND ANNUAL**  
**BEST**  
**RESTAURANTS**  
**EDITORS' CHOICE**  
**AWARDS**

For the second year in a row, we've chosen some memorable restaurants from our past year's dining experiences throughout the Okanagan to bring you an eclectic, sometimes eccentric, selection of what we think are this year's most deserving restaurants. But hey, if you think the reasoning behind our choices is somewhat flawed see if your fellow readers did any better with the Readers' Choice Awards beginning on page 49.

*Selections by* Luke Redd, Laurie Carter and Karen Slivar



## BEST OF THE BEST

AUDREY SURRAO OF FRESKO RESTAURANT AND LOUNGE SAYS SHE LOOKS FOR "POISE, POLISH, A GREAT SMILE AND A GENUINE LOVE OF SERVING" IN THE PEOPLE SHE HIRES TO SERVE GUESTS

There is only one restaurant in the Okanagan that I am completely, unabashedly in love with. Happily, my wife feels the same way or else I'd have to resort to confessing that I work for the C.I.A. (*Culinary Intelligence Agency* — duh!) to explain away some of the lonely evenings she would be having. Few dining establishments deserve this amount of swooning, but Fresco Restaurant and Lounge certainly does, setting the bar high for the rest of the Valley.

Bliss can be found in the details. Chef Rod Butters and his team create delectable dishes, artistically presented, using ingredients that actually taste like they are supposed to — truly a surprising experience at first for anyone (most of us) who is used to eating from the world of over-processed, factory-farmed Frankenfood. Tomatoes with the fresh, sweet richness of the sun; blueberries that explode in your mouth

with candied, tangy juice; beets that always make a liar out of me ("I hate them"). The whole concept seems deceptively simple. Sorry Rod, but the arm injury that ended your short-lived baseball career has been a blessing for the Okanagan. Saint Butters is what my mom called him two summers ago.

But a great experience isn't just about the food. Audrey Surrao and her attentive staff provide a level of service that treats guests like special VIPs rather than intruders. Even Rod gets into this act. As a vegan, I've come to expect disdain from chefs. But at Fresco, I've never been treated as second-class. At dessert there, I always order the sorbet — it's practically my only option. However, on my last visit, my dessert menu was taken from me almost as quickly as it was given. Rod decided to try out something special on this silly vegan, creating a decadent tasting flight of exotically-spiced baked apples with walnuts and an array of caramelized blood oranges topped with blood orange sorbet. I signaled Rod with my giddy approval — you can do that with an open kitchen.

In the late summer, be sure to try my favourite item — tomato soup. Actually, any soup at Fresco is divine. "In my opinion this is one of the true measuring sticks of exceptional cooking skills," Rod says. And before you get into the wine list, you really must experience one of Fresco's seasonal fruit martinis. Audrey says, "We infuse our own vodkas and make our own fruit purées and fruit waters. Our apricot martini is one example that just shouts Okanagan! (Vodka, Elephant Island Orchard Apricot Wine, apricot purée and fresh apricot juice)."

If you're not convinced by the food or service (yeah, right!), Audrey and Rod are keen to point out that "by supporting Fresco, our guests are supporting 20 to 30 local farmers and suppliers and 50-plus wineries. It's a long and positive chain reaction!" Feel the love. —LR

See the contact info for these establishments on page 47.

PHOTO BY KYLE PERISON



If you're going to run a wine bar, you couldn't pick a much better spot than the heart of the Naramata Bench. Bonus if you can operate out of one of the Okanagan's most venerable historic sites, the meticulously restored Naramata Inn. Cobblestone Wine Bar & Restaurant scores on all points. I personally prefer the intimate surroundings, subterranean warmth and subdued lighting of the cellar venue, but there's also no denying the appeal of its secluded, leafy patio.

Cobblestone was originally designed to showcase BC wine to guests of the inn, visitors to the Valley and locals. Not surprisingly, the main focus is on the Naramata Bench terroir with an extensive selection of other Okanagan wines. During the high season, you'll find eight whites, eight reds and one rose available by the glass, along with a staff that's ready, willing and able to help with pairing suggestions.

Chef Thomas Render likes to highlight sustainable and environmentally friendly meats, seafood and artisan products, changing his menu to reflect what's in season and using the inn's garden to supply herbs and produce.

His west coast paella is a great combination of flavours and the braised short rib is an ongoing best seller. But I never manage to get past his brilliant "small plates" — organic carrot and ginger soup; asparagus, fingerling potato and warm goat cheese salad; and rock oven fired hearth bread with a choice of accompaniments like Poplar Grove cheeses, artichoke and olive tapenade, artisan chorizo and duck rilette.

Cobblestone even lays on live music Friday nights. —LC

## BEST CELLAR IN A CELLAR



THOMAS RENDER,  
EXECUTIVE CHEF OF  
COBBLESTONE WINE  
BAR & RESTAURANT  
WORKS MAGIC  
WITH ROCK OVEN  
FIRED HEARTH  
BREAD PAIRED  
WITH TOPPINGS  
REMINISCENT OF  
THE WORLD'S GREAT  
WINE REGIONS



## BEST HOMEMADE, FAMILY-INSPIRED ITALIAN

CINDY SACCO, MIKE SACCO, ROSA SACCO AND DANNY SACCO OF TITA'S ITALIAN BISTRO DISH UP AN AUTHENTIC TASTE OF ITALY TO PLEASE THE MASSES

I phoned ahead to make dinner reservations only to hear the answering machine tell me it was first come first served (but large groups of six or more reservations recommended...). So we headed out straight from work hoping to beat the crowd.

The aroma of garlic greeted us as we walked across the parking lot. We timed it just right, two groups were already ahead of us but the five o'clock dinner crowd was just finishing up. As we waited for a table, two more groups walked in the door and hunkered down behind us.

Tita's Italian Bistro in Vernon is a family affair with mom and pop in the kitchen, daughter, son and daughter-in-law up front. Seating is limited—I counted eleven tables. Spic and span clean, the bistro felt like home with its casual decor, tile floor and laminate tabletops.

Once seated we ordered drinks: for hubby a sour cherry Italian soda and for me a Shirley Temple. "Italian Shirley coming up," said Danny our server. The concoction turned out to be a glass filled with ice, a splash of grenadine and a bottle of Orangina pop—best Shirley I've had.

We perused the menu and found all our favourites: gnocchi, lasagna and cannelloni. Hubby decided to try

the dry pasta dish with seafood tossed in olive oil (the lasagna was meat heavy), and I opted for the veal cannelloni smothered in cream sauce (had a choice of tomato or cream). Butchering the pronunciation, we ordered crostini—toasted bread topped with diced tomatoes, garlic, fresh herbs, bocconcini cheese and extra virgin olive oil. Baked. "It's pronounced krd-stini," Danny was only too happy to point out.

For dessert, he tempted us—OK *me*—with his mom's homemade lemon cake. Two forks, sized to share, it was melt-in-your-mouth good and light as a feather. Perfect after a rich meal.

The homemade cuisine was yummy, but then the lineup gave it away. —KS

See the contact info for these establishments on page 47.

PHOTO BY KYLE PERISON

**A**lthough downtown Penticton already has a variety of popular and worthy restaurants, a newcomer is making both locals and tourists take notice. Rose Amante and Mexican-born chef Abul Adame, who has worked in the kitchens of some of Vancouver's hippest spots, opened Amante Bistro last spring to good response, bringing the small Okanagan city a compact fine dining establishment that is big on class and character.

The first thing you'll notice about Amante Bistro is the stylish decor. Rich colours—sage greens, chocolate browns and other warm, earthy hues—mingle with design elements that are decidedly modern and clean. The entire restaurant only comprises about 10 tables, so the atmosphere feels relaxed and is a nice place to slow down and flow into a conversation.

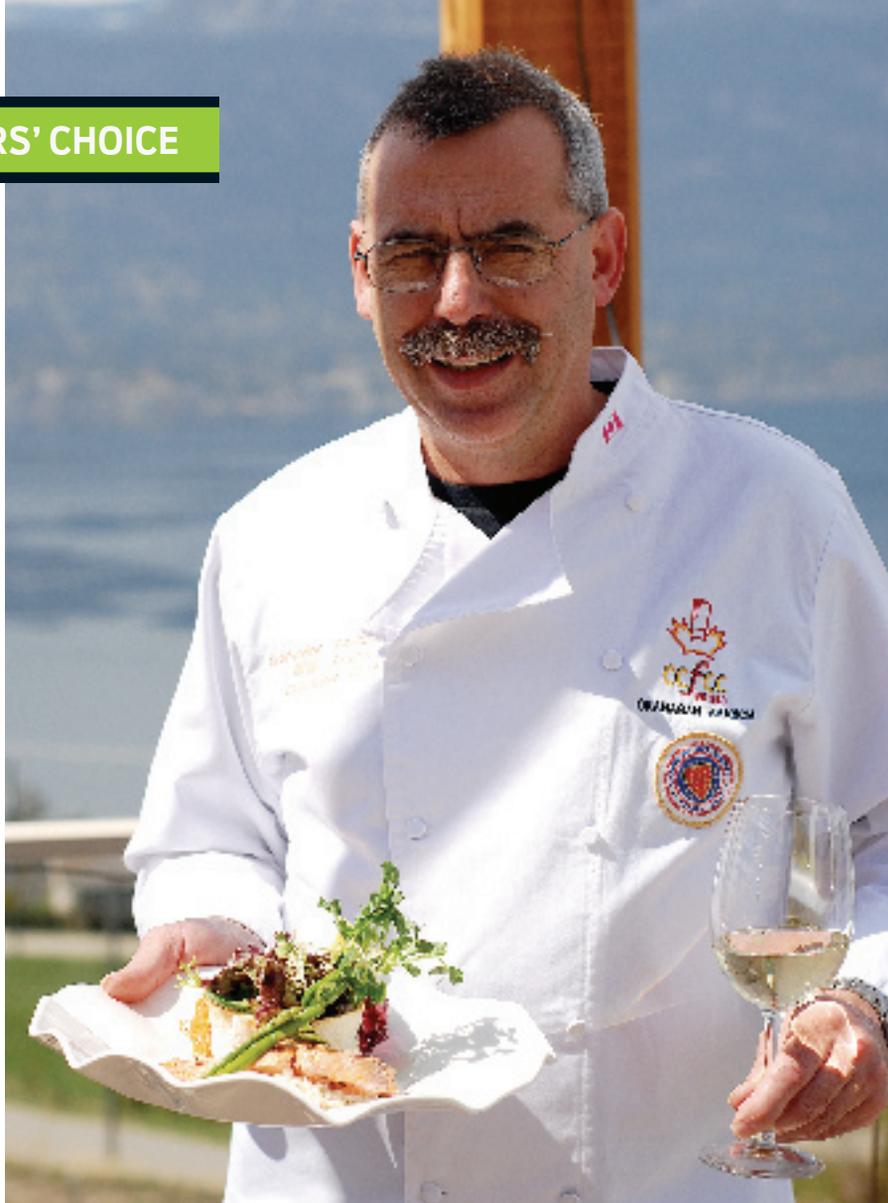
The menu is fairly concise but offers an array of fascinating options for mature palates—I think I even spotted oxtail. Some of these items were a little too “interesting” for my wife's personal preferences, and certainly for mine (being vegan), but we were still filled up on some truly yummy choices.

The standout item for me was a simple appie that scored big points for lip-smacking satisfaction: grilled romaine drizzled with balsamic maple dressing (I made them hold the parmesan). But it was clear with our other dishes that Abul is heavily inspired by both local and global cuisine. The antipasto list is especially enticing and inventive with options that looked light and easy to eat and share.

With wine tourism being such a big presence in the South Okanagan, a dining establishment like Amante Bistro is sure to continue to draw discerning and curious foodies away from their tours of the vines. Hopefully the locals will also continue to embrace this spot as one more vivid colour in the ever-diversified tapestry of our region. —LR

## BEST NEW ADDITION TO PENTICTON'S MAIN STREET

THIS TRIO OF ANTIPASTOS IS JUST ONE OF MANY APPELLING ANTIPASTO OPTIONS ON AMANTE BISTRO'S MENU—YOU CAN EVEN MIX AND MATCH THEM



## BEST WINERY LUNCH FOR TIRED PADDLERS — AND ANYBODY ELSE

CHEF WILLI FRANZ OF GRAY MONK WINERY'S GRAPEVINE RESTAURANT APPLIES HIS EUROPEAN TRAINING TO THE BEST BC INGREDIENTS FOR A UNIQUELY OKANAGAN EXPERIENCE

**G**ray Monk is one of the most venerable wineries in the Okanagan. In 1972, George and Trudy Heiss were among the first growers to get permission to make and sell wine from their own grapes, and their son George Jr. is carrying on the family tradition. This pioneering family was among the first to add food service to their winery experience and it's no surprise that they're also on the leading edge of unique wine touring.

I arrived for lunch at the Grapevine Restaurant on a hot late-June afternoon, pretty much knackered from a morning's canoeing on Okanagan Lake with Reg Scott's Winds and Rivers Escapes. Nothing could have been more welcome than a comfy chair under a beamy umbrella where

I could contemplate the slope of the vineyard toward the blue water and the ridges beyond. Revived by a chilled, fruity Auxerrois, I was soon tackling the menu created by Euro-trained chefs Willi and René.

Several of my paddle-mates ordered wine flights — three different varietals — to sample with lunch. Soon fork duels erupted around the table (nothing to do with the wine) as we snatched bites from each other's plates — hot smoked chicken salad (the special), veal sausage, slices of goat cheese slivered between wedges of grilled gala apple, roasted duck salad, tiger prawns, chicken breast with mango curry sauce....

There was no stopping us. When every crumb of the main course had disappeared we ordered more wine and switched to spoons. More cross-table tasting — crème brûlée with sun-dried cherries (sun-dried cherries! unbelievable) and fresh strawberries trimmed with frills of whipped cream.

The only problem with a meal at The Grapevine is that you can't really get away without stopping by the winery tasting room. So a few bottles of Pinot Gris and maybe a Latitude 50 or two just slide into your trunk.... Nothing to do with those flights at lunch. (Uh-huh.) —LC



See the contact info for these establishments on page 47.

PHOTOS BY KYLE PERISON

**T**alk about a cellar.... The Toasted Oak Wine Bar & Grill stocks 370 Okanagan wines. That's it, nothing but Valley vintages in this eatery, backed up with an on-site VQA shop. Find something you like with lunch and you can pick up a few take-out bottles to top up the home cellar. So convenient.

Co-owner Joanne Ruhland, who recently decided to escape the rigours of stay-at-home motherhood for the relative sanity of managing a restaurant, says their rotating wines-by-the-glass program provides a selection of five reds and five whites, so everybody in your party can order something different—then swap a sip. So efficient.

There's beer on tap, too. Six BC micro-brewns, solo or in flights.

And all the potables are selected to complement a menu that changes with the season, constantly evolving to take advantage of local produce, often organic, with healthy choices, vegetarian choices and specialties for kids. Chef Charles Stover says perennial favourites include roast lamb from Kaleden and Salt Spring Island mussels steamed in red Thai coconut curry broth

## BEST ONE-STOP SIP 'N' DINE 'N' SHOP

along with daily specials and homemade soups. So tasty.

The Toasted Oak was the first Okanagan restaurant to go Ocean Wise with its menu and it's just enrolled in Restaurant Green Zone, recycling used vegetable oil into bio-fuels. So green.

With open spaces defined by steps and railings and warmed by a desert pallet, the Toasted Oak invites casual, leisurely get-togethers. A regular haunt of local winemakers, this award-winning restaurant, fashioned within the shell of the old Oliver fire hall, also hosts events like winemakers' dinners, tasting classes and the annual Banée of Oliver. So community spirited. (Oooh, good one.) —LC

CHEF CHARLES STOVER OF THE TOASTED OAK WINE BAR & GRILL LIKES TO RECREATE HIS MENU TO MATCH THE SEASONS AND MAKE THE BEST USE OF LOCAL INGREDIENTS

EDITORS' CHOICE



## BEST CORONATION STREET MEETS ROADHOUSE PUB

It's a long way to Tipperary, but not so far to The Two Chefs. And if you manage to squeeze in on English pub night (Saturdays, twice a month), you'll be singing all the tunes from Great War ditties to Henry the Eighth — I am, I am. Even if you can't claim a drop of British blood, Tom Cornwall's Union Jack Tie (matching 35 mini flags strung from the beams and tacked to the walls, I counted), royal family photos from good Queen Vicki to our own Queen Liz, horse brasses, beer mats and chunky trestle tables imbedded with coinage of the realm — will.

This place is all about good company and really good, home-cooked food. Tom, a retired British army VIP chef, and Debbie Slade got together while working on an Alberta military base. It took them two years to find the right location for their culinary duet, a little truck stop on Hwy 97 at the big bend in Okanagan Lake. Debbie definitely claims the best kitchen view in the Valley — and it's just as good from the restaurant and patio.

Make reservations and bring an appetite for pure comfort food: roast pork with stuffing, shepherd's pie; sausage and mash; spinach, leek and Brie pie; fish and chips. The chips are fresh-cut and Debbie personally peels the potatoes for the mash. She also makes all the pastries from scratch (zero trans fats — no comment on the calories) like deep-dish Okanagan apple pie smothered in creamy, yellow custard and Cornish pasties.

The steak and kidney pie is Tom's domain and he handles all the front-of-house duties. Sundays he deals out plate loads of roast beef piled on mashed potatoes, with unEnglish munchy veg and roast potatoes, topped by a meaty/crispy/airy Yorkshire pudding and about a gallon of pan-dripping gravy. You'll want a beer to offset the sinus-sizzling horseradish (optional). —LC



TWO CHEFS, TOM CORNWALL AND DEBBIE SLADE, BRING A COMFY TASTE OF BRITAIN TO THE VALLEY

See the contact info for these establishments on page 47.

PHOTOS BY BRUCE KEMP

**O**ur first Japanese food experience in Kelowna (back in 1991) was on a recommendation from a Japanese friend living in Toronto. All it took was one visit and we were hooked on sushi. Back then there were only two Japanese eateries to choose from. Today, they're sprouting up everywhere from takeout to sit down — 15 and counting in Kelowna.

One of our favourites is Genjie, located in an oddball spot in a light commercial zone on Spall. The bland exterior of the building hides a sleek modern interior decorated in dark wood, with an artificial bamboo atrium divider and stylish sushi bar. Standard table or private booth with call button — take your pick. (The novelty of the call button had my hubby itching to push it the first time we were seated in the booth section.)

Food presentation is where Genjie shines. Take a typical sunamono salad (clear noodles in a vinegar bath) served in a small bowl — Genjie presents it in a martini shaped glass bowl with pineapple, prawn spear, cherry tomato and greens (radish sprouts are my guess).

The victuals taste as good as they look. The steamed shrimp dumplings that come in a mini bamboo steamer are delicious. My hubby likes the deep-fried tofu with steamed vegetables that comes in a sweet dipping sauce — a small meal in itself. Our fave is the Super Crunch rolled sushi — crab, avocado, cucumber, rice and seaweed rolled in crispy bits with a side of wasabi (green paste that tastes like strong horseradish), pickled ginger (to clean your palate between bites) and soy sauce.

For those not in the know, Japanese food is not just about eating raw fish. There's chicken, beef and salmon teriyaki (meat marinated in soy sauce), tempura vegetables and prawns (Japanese version of deep-fried but better tasting), yakisoba (stir-fried noodles) with your choice of meat.... Check it out. —KS

## BEST STYLISH ASIAN ESCAPE



## BEST ALL IN THE FAMILY EATERY

SEAN RUSSELL MAY NOT SOUND LIKE THE NAME OF A GREEK CHEF, BUT YOU WON'T HAVE ANY DOUBTS ONCE YOU'VE SAMPLED THE FAMILY FOOD AND HOSPITALITY OF THE AEGEAN GRILL

**F**amily restaurants rock. I'm talking family-run establishments where your server has a personal stake in whether or not you have a good time—and you know that the pot-jockey behind the stove is turning out dishes straight from mama-granny-auntie's recipe box. My personal favourites are small, ethnic restaurants—the kind of corner eateries you find in big-city neighbourhoods whose entire clientele lives within a five-block radius. Imagine my joy when I found just such a place in downtown Westbank (not exactly renown as a culinary Mecca—ethnic or otherwise).

The Aegean Grill has all the ingredients—storefront location on a busy street (doesn't get much busier than Hwy 97); compact space (I'm being polite here) seating just 38 dedicated patrons; meet-n-greet by co-owner Amber Russell—who also takes orders and serves the food (caring very much whether or not you have a good time); water topped by next-generation server-in-training, Tyler (who charms everybody with her smile); and master of the semi-open kitchen, Sean Russell (whose mother was happily Greek and possessed a terrific recipe box).

Tuesday nights you've got a shot at a table without reservations, but weekends and special occasions—forget it.

And don't hit the Aegean if you're planning an intimate gaze-into-her eyes dinner for two. You'll be sitting just inches from the folks at the next table, possibly slightly screened by a potted silk ficus, but more likely, party to much of their conversation and certainly fascinated by what you see on their plates. It's pretty much impossible not to break down and actually talk to people you don't know—well, didn't know, until you sat down to dinner.

Everything about the place is warm and homey from the cinnamon (or maybe it's cayenne) stucco walls to the floral vinyl table lays, olive oil tin accessories, background bouzouki music and Greek comfort-food menu. This is not a fast-food establishment. Sean's back there making every homemade dish: chewy kalamari rings; grape leaf dolmates with a thick, lemony sauce; spanakopita wrapped in filo pastry the colour of parchment—its flaky layers thin as sheets of writing paper; creamy tzatziki for dipping—abundantly flecked with dill... and I'm still on the appetizer platter.

Sean does all the standards like souvlaki and roast lamb with the required sides of salad, rice and roast potatoes (Greek food is so over the top), but my undisputed favourite is his baby lamb chops. This dish is always a bit of a mental minefield for me. I just have to banish the image of cuddly little critters and focus on the tenderness and flavour of the two-bite medallions. Bottom line, I am a carnivore.

I really have to applaud Amber and Sean for their local-focus winelist that favours Westbank vintages from Little Straw, Mount Boucherie, Mission Hill and Quail's Gate along with other Okanagan selections and a house Boutari.

Wrap this meal with Sean's own cake-custard-almond-whipped cream Ek Mek. That's all she wrote. —LC

See the contact info for these establishments on page 47.

PHOTO BY KYLE PERISON

**R**ocket's hockey night — the main floor of Sturgeon Hall was bursting. The hostess who greeted us said the only tables were above in the up-class pizzeria. Lead the way, that's why we came. What a delight to discover that the upstairs (formerly Sturgeon) had been redecorated and renamed Bordello's Italian Pizzeria. The hockey kitch was gone — thank you — replaced by tables decked in crisp white linen tablecloths with cheery hurricane lamps that lit the yellow and red painted walls to create an intimate atmosphere.

The one page menu was brilliant in its simplicity: choice of red or white pizza (white being olive oil instead of tomato sauce). Newbies, our server explained the details, "All the pizzas are 12 inch, thin crust, authentic Italian. Big enough for two to share." She suggested we also share a starter. With that we ordered the antipasti — spicy Genoa salami, bella di cerignola olives, pecorino pepato (cheese), warm garlic knots and peppers stuffed with goat's cheese; and a Luigi white pizza — mozzarella and Romano cheeses, crumbled sweet Italian sausage, caramelized onions, cracked black pepper and oregano.

We panicked when the server brought the starter and warned us the peppers were spicy (we're not into hot 'n' spicy). So we dug into the salami, cheese and bread, melt-in-your-mouth wonderful. Our tongues tingled from the zippy cherry peppers with goat's cheese. After that intro we were looking forward to our pizza.

It arrived hot and sparingly sprinkled with toppings — each ingredient packed with flavour so a little went a long way (mmm good). We ended our repast with homemade tiramisu — scrumptious — that was large enough hubby got a nibble. We'll be back for more. —KS

## BEST NEW PIZZERIA — PERIOD

CHRIS CAMERON OF BORDELLO'S ITALIAN PIZZERIA PREPARES AUTHENTIC ITALIAN TREATS LIKE THIS MARGARITA PIZZA





## BEST ALL-ROUND LIQUOR LINE-UP

WATERFRONT WINES  
CHEF MARK FILATOW  
AND SERVICE  
MANAGER BLAKE  
LAWRIE GET RIGHT  
INTO THE SPIRIT OF  
OKANAGAN DINING

**K**elowna's waterfront district is developing a distinct character of urban sophistication with upscale accommodations, residences and amenities that suit the tastes of a discerning clientele. Waterfront Wines perfectly reflects this personality, combining sleek minimalist decor with a meticulously selected list of wine and spirits and a seasonally evolving menu.

Chef Mark Filatow describes the experience as casual fine dining at its best. "We strive to deliver in all aspects, from food to service, wine selection and quality/price ratio." And this is key. While the effort to make this a top-drawer establishment is obvious, Mark is keenly aware of his local business base and he's determined to keep Waterfront Wines from becoming "just a special occasion restaurant." He

sums up the menu as fresh, local and seasonal wherever possible.

Mark likes to make sure the menu offers something for every taste. He says the calamari appetizer is always popular and other specialties include grilled flat iron steak with Bordolaise sauce (now we're talking — seriously carnivorous fare) and halibut filet with house dried local tomato and asparagus risotto — tis the season!

And as the name implies — well, actually, comes right out and says — this place has got the wines to go with the food. Service manager, Blake Lawrie (a familiar face behind the bar) takes full charge of the 250-plus-selection wine list, which he says is divided about equally between local and international labels.

"No wine makes it to the list unless we've tasted it and feel that it's the best representation of its blend or varietal," he says. (What a great job!) The same goes for spirits where this establishment has gained a well-earned reputation for cocktails and most particularly for Blake's collection of special "wee drams."

Again, he's done his homework to offer the best representation, but "that being said, if a regular customer swears by a product (spirit) we will do our best to have it on the shelf the next time he comes in." Now that's service. —LC



See the contact info for these establishments on page 47.

PHOTOS BY KYLE PERISON

**T**hose with a penchant for exotic, well-balanced flavours and spices have a new hot spot to frequent. For the past year, Da Tandoor has promoted offerings dubbed “fusion Indian cuisine” in the space formerly occupied by The Finer Choice in downtown Kelowna. Signature dishes include tandoori halibut, but a closer look at the large menu (92 items!) reveals a few dishes of Manchurian, Chinese and even Italian influence — tandoori chicken pasta is a popular item here.

Gurvinder Momi, owner of Da Tandoor and two other well-liked Kelowna restaurants (Dawett and Chutney), says his new establishment is about serving authentic Indian fare with a more modern presentation.

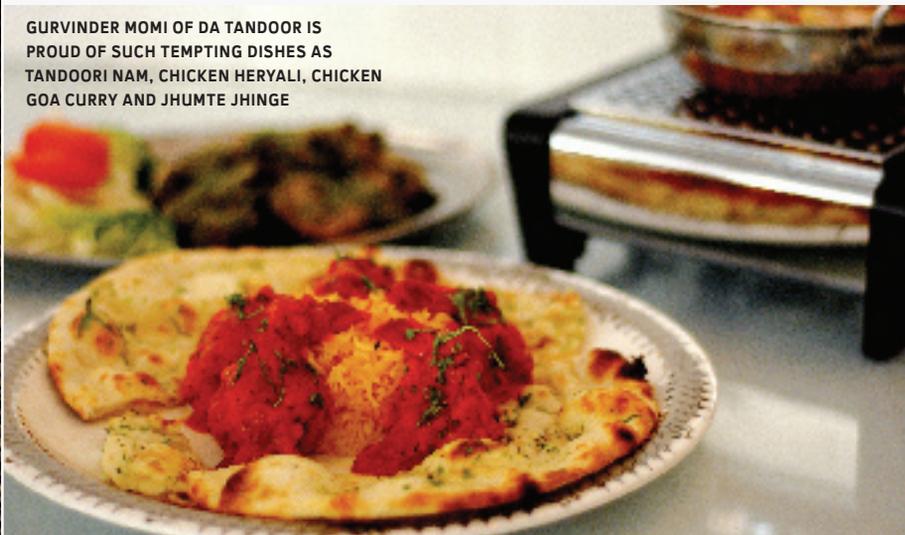
My last time there, I tried the vegetable goa curry (“vegetables cooked with a unique blend of coconut cream and fresh cilantro”). Served with perfect nan bread, it easily measured up to, and probably surpassed, similar offerings I’ve had at fine Indian restaurants elsewhere, and it had all the elements you’d want — flavour harmony, depth and titillating spice (you get to choose from six levels of heat; I picked medium).

And in a nod to the dramatic fun of fajitas, and possibly a first for the Okanagan, Da Tandoor features four dishes (chicken, lamb, paneer or vegetables) served smoking and sizzling hot on a tawa. A tawa, also known as a tava or tawah, is a large disc-shaped griddle, either flat or slightly concave, that is used in Indian and Pakistani cuisine to prepare several different kinds of breads and special meals.

The restaurant itself features plenty of comfy booths and for the lunch crowd a well-stocked buffet signals an exciting pick-me-up to the monotony of many a work day. —LR

## BEST NEW ASIAN RESTAURANT

GURVINDER MOMI OF DA TANDOOR IS PROUD OF SUCH TEMPTING DISHES AS TANDOORI NAM, CHICKEN HERVALI, CHICKEN GOA CURRY AND JHUMTE JHINGE





## BEST FROSTY FLAVOURS

ROBERT KLEI OF OSOYOOS GELATO IS CONSTANTLY EXPERIMENTING WITH NEW FLAVOURS LIKE BLACKBERRY MERLOT MADE WITH REAL WINE

**G**elato—let's take the day off work and head down to Osoyoos. Unfortunately, I don't think the boss will go for it. Crème brûlée, caramel, mochaccino, Toblerone.... Maybe a visit today isn't in order, but definitely soon.

Hubby and I fell in love with gelato while on a trip to Croatia in 2006. Ever since then we drive out of our way to indulge in the treat. That was before we learned it contains less than five per cent butterfat (regular ice cream, 16 to 18 per cent)—like I really needed to know that tidbit! But we're not alone in our quest for gelato.

Ice cream fanatics, Robert Klei and wife Gwen used to hop on their bikes and visit all the ice-cream shops in Calgary, where they lived. They dreamed of opening up a parlour themselves. In 1999 the couple moved to Osoyoos where Robert took a job at a local winery. A tourist destination, the idea of running an ice-cream shop kept coming up. So in 2006—same year we discovered gelato (coincidence? maybe)—Robert went to the University of Guelph, in Ontario, to learn how to make ice cream and opened up Osoyoos Gelato in May.

Robert is always experimenting with flavours. Some

of the newer ones include chai tea, Saskatoon berry, cinnamon and root beer. He's also doing more with herbs and has come up with honey and lavender. He didn't tell us his other herb concoctions as he's still perfecting them, you'll just have to visit the biz to discover his successes.

He's changed the recipe for his hot 'n' spicy chocolate—still spicy, but different spice—and renamed it Aztec chocolate. Robert also makes a good assortment of sorbetto, popular with vegans and people with lactose intolerance.

Osoyoos Gelato is open seasonally, following daylight saving, first week in March to the first week in November. Phone ahead to confirm hours at 250.495.LICK. —KS

# This year's picks

(Call ahead to confirm hours and reservation requirements)

## Fresco Restaurant & Lounge

1560 Water Street, Kelowna  
250.868.8805

## Cobblestone Wine Bar & Restaurant

Naramata Heritage Inn & Spa  
3625 1st Street, Naramata  
250.496.6808

## Tita's Italian Bistro

3002 41st Avenue, Vernon  
250.545.1950

## Amante Bistro

101 – 483 Main Street, Penticton  
250.493.1961

## The Grapevine Restaurant

Gray Monk Estate Winery  
1055 Camp Road, Okanagan Centre  
250.766.3168 or 1.800.663.4205

## Toasted Oak Wine Bar & Grill

34881 – 97th Street, Oliver  
250.498.4867 ext. 1  
or 1.888.880.9463 ext. 1

## Two Chefs

6575 Hwy 97 South, Peachland  
250.767.1991

## Genjie Japanese Restaurant

102 – 1873 Spall Road, Kelowna  
250.869.0852

## Aegean Grill

2437 Main Street, Westbank  
250.707.1177

## Bordello's Italian Pizzeria

at Sturgeon Hall Restaurant  
1481 Water Street, Kelowna  
250.868.0466

## Waterfront Wines Restaurant & Wine Bar

104 – 1180 Sunset Drive, Kelowna  
250.979.1222 ex 2 or 1.866.979.1222 ext. 2

## Da Tandoor

237 Lawrence Avenue, Kelowna  
250.869.4809

## Osoyoos Gelato

2 Lakeview Plaza  
9150 Main Street, Osoyoos  
250.495.LICK

## And a quick nod to some of our favourites choices from last year...

### Best Place to Practice Dropping Food with Two Sticks

Hoang Gia Vietnamese Cuisine  
Kelowna, 250.861.3010

### Best Lesson in Greek Mythology

The Greek House Restaurant  
Lake Country, 250.766.2510

### Best Place to Get Warmed Up for Your Mexican Getaway

Vallarta Grill  
Penticton, 250.492.5610

### Best Outrageously Huge Feast for Fair Ladies and Jolly Jesters

Gasthaus Pub  
Peachland, 250.767.6625

### Best Place to Live Out Your Romantic Fantasy

Fresco Restaurant & Lounge  
Kelowna, 250.868.8805

### Best Place to Experience More Than You Bargained For

The Sonora Room  
at Burrowing Owl Estate Winery  
Oliver, 250.498.0620

### Best Place to Get Attitude

The Blind Angler Grill  
Peachland, 250.767.9264

### Best Food for Body, Mind and Spirit

Best of India  
Oliver, 250.498.0872

### Best Place to Make a Social Statement

Talkin Donkey  
Vernon, 250.545.2286



### Best High-Altitude Barbecue

The Lost Moose Lodge Resort  
Penticton, 250.490.0526

### Best Eclectic Restaurant in a Small Town

The Vanilla Pod  
Summerland, 250.494.8222

### Best Reason to Ignore Health Warnings About Clogged Arteries (At Least Once in a While)

Shady Rest British Fish & Chips  
Kelowna, 250.860.2260

### Best Example of Greek Family Values

Theo's Restaurant  
Penticton, 250.492.4019

### Best Schizo Food Pairing

Cantaloupe Annie's  
Oliver, 250.498.2955

### Best Place to Catch a Western Adaptation of *The King and I*

Siam Orchid Thai Restaurant  
Kelowna, 250.860.5600

### Best Place to Disturb a Meat- Lover's Personal Paradigm

Lake Tai Vegetarian Restaurant  
Kelowna, 250.860.1588

### Best Place to Banish Your Aversion to Mussels

The Italian Kitchen  
Vernon, 250.558.7899