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Taste of the Tropics

A creative new menu for downtown.

Sitting on the balcony at the Blue Luna Club, right at the level of the trees on 13th Avenue, feels a bit like nesting. Forget the street noise, which just gives the deck a more metropolitan feel; it's the trees you notice. The Blue Luna, which opened last month above Big City Gamin', is a Caribbean restaurant serving a host of unusual (at least for Eugene) items, including frog legs, alligator kabobs and curried goat. A carafe of sweetly tangy mango-papaya-passionfruit sangria and a quick-to-the-table appetizer of johnnycakes started our food explorations. The johnnycakes, two corn cakes with a layer of smoked gouda served with a spicy garlic-mango sauce, were cheerily tasty, but a little heavy for one person — definitely order them to share.

The curried goat, in the words of a more-frequent meat-eater, was "like pot roast, but chewier." The dark meat arrived in a green, gravy-like curry sauce that had more in common with Indian or Japanese curry than Thai.

It was chewy but surprisingly tender; I imagined something tougher coming from such wiry creatures. All the Blue Luna's meat and seafood dishes are served with a choice of black or red beans and brown or jasmine rice; go for the red beans and brown rice for a better flavor match to the meat.

The "chef's favorite" seafood casserole didn't impress in quite the same way as the goat. Langostino, conch, crab and shrimp sounded flavorful and exciting, but the meat was shredded and unrecognizable in its heavy and slightly bland cream sauce. A crumb topping and perfectly sized portion made me want to like the dish, but the overall impression was very like the seafood salad you can get at a deli — if a little more exotic. The casserole lightened considerably when loaded onto a fork with jasmine rice and black beans, though, and my curiosity remained piqued — what about the rest of the dishes? Go with a group so you can try everything. I'm still wondering about the Jamaican jumping fish, and it's not even lunchtime yet.



Blue Luna Club
1280 Willamette St., Suite 206.
11 am-2:30 am daily. \$-\$\$\$.

EW

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