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Blissful Spoon is a passion project for Miki Bekkari and her husband, Kamal. As Kamal is from Morocco and Miki worked in Beirut, the two have a deep appreciation for food from the Mediterranean — Italian, French, Spanish, Moroccan regions and more. They lived in Australia for a number of years with corporate jobs but returned to the Northwest three years ago to be near family.

I would never have guessed that this is the first restaurant the Bekkaris have owned. The service was attentive, friendly and professional. The modern space is clean and welcoming. Food was delivered at a good pace, delays (at breakfast) were expressed before I ordered. There was no need for any apologies.

Blissful Spoon is open until 9 p.m. Thursday through Saturday. It was the perfect time to meet a friend for the Tapas small plates. Everything on the menu was appealing. They recommend three Tapas plates for every two people, but we opted to try a wider variety.

The menu described the Seta Ajillo as “super addictive.” These “garlic mushrooms” were mushrooms sautéed in olive oil, garlic and Spanish sherry vinegar. They were very good, but my dining companion felt that they would taste better “on something” like a steak or chicken rather than on their own.

We then had the Shishito Peppers sautéed in olive oil and tossed with coarse salt and spices. It came with red pepper aioli. The peppers had a hint of heat, but it was not too spicy. A squeeze of lime cut through the oily coating, and the salt mixture brought out the smokiness of the peppers.

After the nibbles, we opted for more entree-type tapas, starting with the Gambas Pil Pil. A favorite Spanish tapa, gambas is Spanish for shrimp. Pil Pil’s name comes from the sizzling sound the shrimp and garlic make when they hit the hot oil. Like the Gambas I had in Spain, the shrimp were tender and sweet, served in the lightest sauce of tomato and garlic. Smoked paprika and a hint of cumin added complexity and a Mediterranean flavor. We were glad to have fresh housemade bread for dipping to continue enjoying the sauce.

The night we dined, they substituted a rotini puttanesca for the bolognese ragu. This was not the typical tomato-based puttanesca sauce. Instead, the tender spirals were coated in olive oil with several olive varieties, capers, and blistered tomatoes. It was topped with finely grated fresh parmesan. This pasta was the kind of light Italian dish that doesn’t weigh you down. It reminds me of



Gambas Pil Pil tapas are tender garlic shrimp with a hint of cumin and smoked paprika.

the pasta I had in Italy. Mikki later told me that this was a “deconstructed puttanesca,” and it was a recipe from an Italian friend.

The Galette du Chevre was my favorite. Puff, flaky pastry squares were topped with chevre. Caramelized onion, bacon jam and a light balsamic glaze added savory and sweetness that was lightened by the creamy chevre cheese. It was served atop arugula that enhanced the little pastries with a hint of pepper. I ate all three little galettes.

We finished the meal by picking a couple of dessert pastries from the case—a flourless chocolate cake and a Friand. Both were gluten-free, but you would never know it from the flavor. Flourless chocolate cakes can be chalky, dry, or like a ganache. This was moist with a brownie-like flavor that maintained its cake texture.

The Friand was a cake in the shape of a muffin. It’s made with blueberries and almond flour for a sweet, nutty base. The edges were slightly crunchy, the interior moist and crumbly. My friend and I couldn’t decide which dessert was our favorite.

On Sunday morning, I went back for the weekend brunch. You can build an egg breakfast plate or choose from breakfast or lunch items. I was excited to try the Chakchouka. As I arrived when the restaurant first opened (be sure to call to check hours

Details

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as it may not be correct on the internet), the server informed me I would have to wait for the Chakchouka to be ready. I got a gluten-free cinnamon roll and French press coffee while I waited. The cinnamon roll was a little heavier and not as sticky as its typical floured counterparts. I didn’t finish it and warmed it the next day. I liked it better when I reheated it as it brought out the stickiness of the cinnamon and sweetness from the glaze.

Chakchouka varies widely in preparation and flavor depending on where the recipe originates. The Blissful Spoon’s Chakchouka comes from Kamal’s Moroccan family recipe. This is my favorite preparation. Two free-range baked eggs are cradled in a base of roasted red peppers and tomatoes. Chunky tomatoes were chewy, giving it a good mouthfeel. This version was harissa-forward. That is, the sweet, smoky harissa spice was detectable but not overpowering.

To get a complete picture of the brunch food, I also offered a Jambon au Buerre (buttered ham sandwich). This sandwich was truly a blissful experience. The imported French ham was delicately sweet and savory. Warmed Brie cheese added rich creaminess. All of the richness was balanced with halved cornichons (small sweet pickles) and a hint of honey mustard on soft house ciabatta. I savored every bite. All of the bread choices can be substituted with housemade gluten-free bread.

As I spoke with Mikki, Kamal brought out a new dish to try. Sformata di Ricotta is a small baked ricotta cheese dome served with Italian parsley and arugula mix that is topped with olive oil, preserved lemons, and various olives. Alone the custardy ricotta isn’t much, but when combined with the lemon, peppery greens and variety of olives, it becomes a harmony of flavors that play off each other in a happy dance on your tongue.

Whether you go to Blissful Spoon to enjoy their gluten-free offerings or to enjoy the French and Mediterranean tapas, it’s likely that your tastebuds will experience the bliss. As COVID restrictions end, the Bekkaris plan to build out the wine bar in the restaurant’s cellar. They expect to have it open by next winter.

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