

# DINE

SARA WAXMAN TASTES AND TELLS™

Dec **04** 2010

## Review: e11even

Sara Says...Reviews | By Sara Waxman | 4 comments



### **e11even Out of Ten**

I had begun to give up hope. Restaurant designers have been creating war zones rather than dining rooms where a cacophony of sounds bounce off walls like mortar shells and spotlights are pointed to create corneal havoc. Perhaps it is a sign of the times – what came first, art or life? When my lips are moving but I can't hear what I'm saying, I just want to eat and run.

And then I walked through the heavy glass doors to **e11even** and everything changed. Wherever the eye falls, there are surprising and pleasing design elements. The sound level is conversational; the vast room has been designed to create privacy with a variety of seating: circular leather booths, plush banquettes, tables for four. In the bar area, a communal table made from excavated hemlock timbers shows off the beauty of natural wood.

The menu offers food to fortify the hearty as well as to charm those who eat only appetizers and head to the gym. A baseball sized Kobe meatball robed in zesty tomato sauce in its own cast iron pan is a thrilling appetizer that can be deliciously shared by two or three; tuna tartare seasoned



by a knowing hand with buttery avocado and celery salted waffle potatoes; sheep's milk ricotta swirled with handfuls of fresh herbs on a tray with warm grilled country bread; the simple retro Parker House Roll that comes straight from the oven in its own pan; and unforgettable sweet and nutty warm beet salad with walnut brittle and goat cheese. I am thinking that this is international comfort food enjoyed in a spectacularly comfortable room.

Choosing a beverage has never been a more delightful exercise. A tableside iPad with photos of brilliant cocktails and comprehensive details of a 600 bottle wine-cellar along with the guidance of charming head sommelier, Jennifer Huether-Vranjes, is clearly cutting edge hospitality. Master Sommelier Fred Dexheimer, (look him up on Google) a man who creates award-winning beverage programs and is based in New York shows us his skill.

Multi-credentialed Director of Culinary, Chef Robert Bartley has zeroed in on the mood of what we want to eat right now. He has created a menu of modern North American food and cooks it with a distinctly Canadian accent.

The ooh's and aah's at offerings brought by our server echo my own impressions.

Executive Chef David Isen executes the vision of this kitchen with passion and imagination.

A whole slab of sauce-glistened baby back ribs, tender to the bone, are sprinkled with



crushed peanuts and partnered with a cylinder of perfect fries and the best coleslaw imaginable. The signature half roast chicken with mashed potatoes and Bartley's mom's country stuffing is a treat for the eye and the palate; AAA Alberta dry aged rib eye with a trio of delectables such as truffled mac and cheese, broccolini and earthy sautéed wild mushrooms is a feast to share or an indulgence for one.

I'm intrigued and delighted by some of the menu items. I'm looking for someone with whom I can share the gorgeous Platinum Service kosher hot dog all dressed up, and the lobster cobb salad with blue cheese and buttermilk dressing. Double cut bacon with a maple syrup and sherry glaze is offered by the slice. It's an addictive, crisp and salty-sweet herbaceous morsel, and be

warned, its impossible to stop at just one slice. The menu offers an amazing collection of flavours and textures. Transparent food – it is what it is – and it’s the best of what it is.



Do not pass up dessert. For the virtuous, there are freshly baked, still warm chocolate chip cookies and a frosty glass of milk. For people like me who throw caution to the winds when it comes to dessert, there is a hot fudge sundae; peanut butter mousse and Key Lime pie.

Clearly, there is an intelligent, sophisticated team at work here. General Manager Steven Salm, a New Yorker, has learned his craft from the best mentors; The Ritz Carlton in Gramercy Park and lastly with Laurent Tourandel in his renowned BLT restaurants. Steven has raised the bar in this city with his interpretation of hospitality.

Go. You will love it.

**e11even**

Maple Leaf Square

15 York Street (at Bremner Blvd. outside Air Canada Centre)

416-815-1111