

e11even Out Of Ten

Posted [Mar 16 2011](#) by [AlysonK](#) in [Food/Drink](#) with Comments Off



Saturday night... After a rough week, I thought it just may never show up! Hair curled and cheeks bronzed, I slipped into my heels, splashed on one last spritz of perfume and headed out to meet up with my girlfriend for our 8p.m. dinner reservation at e11even (located at 15 York Street beside the ACC.) We arrive at e11even to a warm greeting from two attractive young hostesses; “you must be Alyson,” one says. Immediately I am impressed. We are then introduced to Samantha, e11even’s Supervisor, who is very fun, friendly and accommodating. She shows us to a big round cozy booth which was lit by candle light, complimenting the dim lighting in the restaurant perfectly. My girlfriend and I both agree that we love the atmosphere; the lighting is flawless, the decor is beautiful and the round booths are a favorite of both. As I gaze around the restaurant a unique feature catches my eye, the kitchen is fully visible to the patrons and there is a mirror on the ceiling that show cases the entire lay out of where the chefs prepare the food. Very cool!

Within minutes the Sommelier and Assistant General Manager, Jonathan, (who was an absolute treat– a perfect combination of charm and intelligence, and literally a fountain of knowledge! You can feel the passion he has for his art,) is table side with another unique feature e11even has to offer; an iPad drink menu. The iPad has a list of every cocktail, wine and alcoholic beverage they offer, complete with a description and image of each. Jonathan explains that the descriptions of the cocktails do not include the full recipe so e11even can preserve its secrets. We knew we were in good hands so we told him the types of beverages we typically enjoy and to bring us whatever he thought would suit us. Moments later he brought us over three very pretty and feminine looking cocktails, two in martini glasses and one in a champagne flute which I was immediately attracted to (and of course is the first one I am dying to try.) The Sunset Boulevard was my favorite of the three and was a delicious mixture of sparkling wine, passion fruit and cassis. Second on my list was The Fashionista, a delightful combination of campari, grapefruit

and orange. Coming in last was the Pretty in Pink; the Absolut Citron, strawberry and guava was indeed tasty but slightly too sweet for my taste buds.



Our wonderful waitress, Michelle (who was also an absolute treat, bubbly, funny, knowledgeable and friendly) appeared, introduced herself and explained the chef's specials of the evening. By this time we had viewed our menus and all the amazing sounding dishes e1leven had to offer. Once again we felt we were in great hands, so we told Michelle to serve us whatever she thought we would enjoy in terms of appetizers and entrees, (all the while secretly hoping the tuna tare tare would make its way to our table.) She excitedly accepts the challenge and heads back to the kitchen.

Steve, the General Manager of e1leven makes his way over to our table and introduces himself; a strong, confident and friendly man indeed. He explains the design concepts of the restaurant and tells us a little about future projects. He made us feel right at home at e1leven. He tells us that they are putting some very special dishes together for us and to just sit back, relax and enjoy our evening.

Jonathan returns to get the low down on what we thought of the three cocktails and also said he is bringing out a little special treat for us to pull us out of our comfort zone; Manhattans! I'm not going to lie, I was a little nervous! I had never tried a Manhattan before and am typically not a fan of Bourbon but I trusted Jonathan and although I was nervous, I was also excited. He brings over a classic Manhattan and something a little different called the Mr. Manhattan. The Mr. Manhattan consists of Bulleit Bourbon, averta and peach bitters, (again I will remind you that the drink recipes I am sharing are not in complete form, as e1leven wishes to conserve its recipes.) My girlfriend and I both looked at each other and decided we would each take our first sip at the same time, she would try the classic Manhattan first and I would try the Mr. Manhattan. We each took a sip. Not bad! We exchanged glasses and went in for our second sip. Again; not bad! The drinks were prepared perfectly, and although these are typically drinks I would never order for myself, if I ever felt like indulging in a slow-sipping beverage, after trying e1levens versions of these two drinks, I just may order one.



By this point we are sufficiently tipsy and our excitement is growing by the minute for our appetizers to be served. Michelle then magically appears and has with her four very tasty looking dishes. She explains to us that they chose the Sheep's Milk Ricotta with fresh herbs, served with grilled country bread to dip, the Kobe Meatball with tomato sauce and Parmesan, the Crab Cake with a mustard remoulade and (best for last) the Tuna Tare Tare served on avocado with celery salted potato guafrettes. Looking over these dishes I don't even know what to do with myself! They all looked and smelled AMAZING! Of course I go in for the tuna tare tare first... Speechless. Delicious. I could have ate the entire serving to myself, but alas I had to share and had plenty of other things to save room for. My girlfriend at this point was oohing and awwing over the Kobe meatball, although an unlikely selection for both of us, I was excited to try. I took a bite and it was love. The tomato sauce was bright and bold, and the meat was unbelievably tender. Then was the crab cake; served with some yummy little mixture of julienne vegetables on top (which makes the guilt a little less.) This was probably the most delicious crab cake I had ever tried; melt in your mouth delicious. Last but certainly not least was the sheep's milk ricotta, our servers favorite. Yum! Creamy and light and full of flavor; the perfect comfort food treat. A little on the salty side, but I wasn't complaining. The appetizers were officially an out of the park success! (Did I just make a sports reference?) Both my girlfriend and I agreed that the tuna tare tare and the crab cake were definite must-haves for any seafood lover, and will absolutely be ordered in our near future. The Kobe meatball was tender and delicious, and I am recommending it to all my meat-loving friends and anyone craving a salty, comfort-food type indulgence simply must try the sheep's milk ricotta.



After the remains of our appetizers had been cleared away, Jonathan returned to bring us each four perfectly polished glasses of wine that would pair accordingly with the entrees that were on their way. Three of the glasses were three separate, yet equally elegant designs and the fourth was a duplicate of one of those glasses. Jonathan explains to us that he marked the bottom of one of the duplicate glasses with a tiny red sticker so we knew the difference between the two glasses and that they do this for their guests who order more than one of type of wine per table. I thought that was such a nice little way to look out for the guests and their taste buds.

Jonathan described his wine selections; first was an '09 Cavespring Reisling from Niagara, second was an '09 Kurt Angerer Gruner Veltiner from Kamptal, third was an '08 Jean Marc Brocard from Chablis and Burgandy and the fourth was an '08 Earthworks Shiraz from Barossa Valley. He happily explained each type extensively; the tastes we would encounter at each sip and the specific entrees that each wine pairs best with. Of course we loved each one, but both favored the palate cleansing Reisling and the smooth Shiraz.



Now was time for the entrees. Michelle brought us over linguine topped with a sunny side egg and double smoked bacon, Irish organic salmon paired with a wild grain and almond salad and a big giant cheese burger served with crispy french fries. Once again I was at a loss. Where to start? I began by trying a creamy, well rounded fork-full of the linguine, making sure to get a little bit of the egg and bacon. It was very tasty and hearty. The egg was done exactly how I like it, and of course bacon, no matter how its prepared is always delicious. I would definitely recommend this dish to all the men out there, as it is hearty and packed with protein. Next I helped myself to a bite of the organic salmon which was served on top of a cherry wood plank, it was good, well done with a tasty marinade that had a little kick to it. The wild grain and almond salad was very unique in terms of taste and texture, a delightful little medley mixed with cranberries and hints of citrus. For the salmon lovers who like to keep their meals on the light side— a must try.



Now friends, I must warn you, what I am about to tell you just may change your life. IF you are a lover of burgers, and are searching for the perfect cheese burger, PLEASE LOOK NO FURTHER. When I saw the cheese burger being served, I had no idea what I was in for. Michelle explained it was her favorite dish on the menu, which intrigued me, but still I thought, meh, its just a burger. I was in no way prepared for this life changing moment. I picked up the giant cheese burger which had been cut in half; it was packed with lettuce, tomato and all the other things you would imagine finding on a burger. I took a bite... HEAVEN! It was DELICIOUS! I simply cannot stress this enough my dear friends, this was the best cheese burger I have ever tasted in my entire 20-some odd years of life (sorry Mom!) Michelle explained that they add nothing to the beef, the burger is nothing but ground beef in its delicious simplicity. It was cooked to absolute perfection, medium rare, pink and perfect in all its glory. I am officially in lust with e1leven's big, messy cheese burger and I am NOT scared to admit it! This by far was the show-stopping dish of the night, can you imagine? A cheese burger! My girlfriend commented that she is a big fan of french fries, but she didn't even remember they were there after trying the burger, as she was too wrapped up in its dreaminess. Michelle later told us that it was their most popular dish, and e1leven has sold over 2000 cheese burgers since opening just over one month ago— I can definitely see why.

The remainder of the evening was spent laughing, drinking wine and trading stories with my girlfriend, with the odd pop in from Samantha, Steve, Jonathan and Michelle, who I MUST say were all absolutely wonderful hosts. My girlfriend and I both agreed, earlier in the evening, that we wished the music was slightly louder and as the night went on I noticed that they did turn it up which really added to the vibe of the restaurant. As I gazed around at the other patrons I noticed that everyone looked great— dressed in everything from casual to business casual to suits and cocktail dresses. The atmosphere is a complimentary combination of sophistication and relaxation, so if your going to visit e1leven (which I strongly suggest you do) feel free to go casual or get dressed up. Its a great place to go for dinner and drinks before hitting the town for a night out with friends or to grab a bite to eat and a drink after a Raptor's or Leaf's game. It would also be an ideal place to go for a date, as it is very cozy and its dim lighting makes for a very intimate and romantic evening. The menu at e1leven has a wide variety of selections to suit all types of cravings. Appetizers range from \$9 to \$19, and entrees are \$15 to \$55 to accommodate all budgets. Another great aspect about e1leven is that it is located beside a Longo's grocery store so should a customer request something they don't have on hand, as long as it is within Longo's hours of operation, the staff at e1leven don't mind running down and

grabbing whatever they may need. So don't be shy to ask for exactly what you want because e11even truly believes in impeccable customer satisfaction.



As the dinner dishes were cleared away Michelle told us that they had one last treat for us; key lime pie. She said it was to die for... I was excited! She brought out the key lime pie and placed it in front of my girlfriend and I- piled high with a thick whip cream and sprinkled with nuts. We each picked up a fork and went in for a bite. Speechlessly, we looked at each other with an "oh my god" expression on our faces as our forks dropped to the table. Does it get any better than this? Light, not too sweet, perfect amount of lime and whip cream- this dessert is absolute heaven.

Needless to say we will be returning to e11even and I highly recommend everyone follow suit. My mouth is literally watering as I think about the tuna tare tare, the cheese burger and key lime pie and I just may stop in tonight on my way home from work. Food was a 10 out of 10, service was a 20 out of 10. The staff was SO friendly and accommodating, we truly felt we were among friends.

I'd like to extend a sincere thank you for the wonderful experience to Samantha, Jonathan, Steve and Michelle, you made our night wonderful and were integral in creating such a lasting memory.

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