

KAREN MAMONE Dining Out

Big city vibes on St. Armands Circle: Bottleshop and Cork

Perched at the edge of St. Armands Circle are a pair of urbane new eateries that reflect the clean and elegant lines of architect Guy Peterson's sleek redo of a vintage wine shop.

The Bottleshop sold wine and spirits in the area for many years at 29 N. Boulevard of the Presidents. Now, after a complete renovation and remodeling, the site is home to a streetlevel cafe and wine bar with patio seating; and upstairs to Cork, a classic fine dining restaurant that specializes in eclectic American cuisine with a continental accent.

There, traditional informal brasserie fare such as steak frites and gratineed onion soup rubs shoulders with upscale fusion offerings like orange and coriander crusted tuna or a Livornese fish stew. Both restaurants feature a subdued modern decor that offers lots of contemporary paintings and cool Euro-design furnishings, along with a view overlooking the seasonal bustle or quieter summer swelter of St. Armands Circle.

Both of the eateries offer outside patio dining, and the stewardship of acknowledged local professionals. Managing partner Jeff Trefry opened the two restaurants in February. Trefry is a Culinary Institute of American grad and an former executive chef with more than 30 years' experience in the hospitality business.

Chef Mac deCarle is well-known to local diners for his many years at Cafe L'Europe and the Beach Bistro.

One menu serves all day and into evening for the Bottleshop. It includes lighter fare such as a range of salads (\$8-\$16), soups ((\$6-\$9), and brasserie favorites that include sole fingers with herb mayo (\$15), mussels (\$14), steak frites (\$19), and a bistro burger (\$12). Soups are homemade; sandwiches include croque monsieur (or the chicken-y madam at \$10). Brick oven pizzas (\$12-\$14) are another favorite offering.

A popular summer special at Bottleshop runs \$39.95 for a dinner for two. Entrees range from \$9 for fried calamari to \$19 for Maine lobster ravioli.

Upstairs at Cork, starters include tempting selections such as roasted prawns (\$14), organic Scottish gravalax (\$13), and the Maine lobster parfait (chilled lobster meat layered with a dressing of lemongrass, vanilla and yogurt at \$19). The esteemed crustacean also shows up in the cold lobster and Riesling soup at \$11.

The Cork entree list starts with a disarmingly simple chicken and dumplings (\$28), and includes a favorite roasted halibut "Tbone" (with lavender honey, olive oil, veal jus, grilled radicchio and lemon jam, \$36) and Cacciucco, a Tuscan fish dish with

shrimp, clams, mussels and lobster in a tomato-garlic broth (\$32).

Other entrees range from \$28 to \$64 – the latter for the extravagant bone-in filet Rossini with Hudson Valley foie gras and fresh, sliced truffled potato Mont D'Oro.

Special events planned during the summer include informal wine tastings (rose was the most recent), an amateur chef's competition, and seminars with staff on areas as diverse as sheep's milk cheeses, Indian and North African spices, and South American cuisine.



WHEN YOU GO

- The Bottleshop and Cork, 29 N. Blvd. of the Presidents; call 388-2675, or fax 388-4500.
- During the summer, the Bottleshop opens at 11 a.m. and serves lunch until 2:30 p.m.; dinner is from 5 to 10 p.m. Happy hour prices, with two for one drinks, apply from 4 to 7 p.m. It serves 96 inside and out.
- Cork serves dinner from 6 to 10 p.m. It has indoor and outdoor dining for 72.
- Reservations accepted for any number at both restaurants.
- Catering, and take-out available.
- All major credit cards accepted.