

Groupe Grandio's has another gem of a restaurant in Chez Lionel

MtlRestoRap

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Groupe Grandio made its biggest headlines in recent years with the acquisition of iconic steakhouses Moishes and Gibbys. But the highly successful culinary operation has a host of other dining establishments in its stable and that includes the French brasserie Chez Lionel, which presently has five locations and a sixth on the way this spring.

While in Ottawa, we enjoyed our first experience at the new Kanata location. Chez Lionel was purchased by Groupe Grandio in 2022, and this locale marks its first outside of Quebec. The intention is to expand across the country. The others are in Boucherville, Brossard, Sainte-Therese and Laval (presently being renovated after flooding last summer). In March the sixth Chez Lionel will debut in downtown Montreal at 1259 Rene-Levesque Ouest.

The Kanata location has 96 seats in the dining room, 25 more at the bar and a seasonal patio that can accommodate 58, notes General Manager James Denis. It is located directly off Highway 417 at ground level of a Holiday Inn. There is ample free parking. The interior is very attractive, with large chandeliers and mirrors.

Chez Lionel made its debut in Boucherville in 2013. Frédéric Dufort has been the executive chef for Chez Lionel since it first opened.

Our server Rebecca made several menu recommendations. We started off with some drinks; two Seville in Blooms and one Lady Marmalade mocktail.

There is a nice array of appetizers. While I enjoyed a piping hot and absolutely delicious cream of butternut squash soup, with an "L" appearing in the broth, the other two members of our party shared the bluefin tataki, prepped with a wild caraway crust, pickled carrots, orange supreme, sesame carrot purée and carrot chips and the duck confit arancini, served with black garlic aioli, pickled mushrooms, grana padano, parmesan and watercress. I happily split the 12 oysters with them.

For the main course I jumped at the opportunity to have the duck breast a l'orange. It cut like butter and had a pink peppercorn crust, coming with butternut squash purée, kumquat, marmalade, grand marnier gastrique and puffed wild rice. The others shared the seafood risotto and the braised beef cheek. The former contained lobster bisque, Argentine shrimps, bay scallops, green peas, garlic bread croutons and saffron mayonnaise; the former was prepared with red wine sauce, roasted Nantes carrots, confit cipollini onions, chanterelles and truffled celeriac purée

For dessert we shared the tarte tatin, a pastry in which apples are caramelized in butter and sugar before being baked and served with a scoop of vanilla ice cream and an irresistible macaron platter of six.

Other popular items on the menu include the ricotta ravioli with duck confit and truffles, tomahawk steaks, salmon and beef tartare, pan-seared Icelandic cod and



The braised beef cheek at Chez Lionel

butternut squash gnocchi. I can hardly wait to go back to one of the Montreal-area locations closer to home.

Chez Lionel is located at 101 Kanata Ave. suite 100. For reservations please call 613-518-2113, e-mail kanata@chezlionel.ca or log on to www.chezlionel.ca

Mike's Ottawa Resto Notes: Ember, Red Lobster, Cindy's and Dinty's in Aylmer

One of Ottawa's newest restaurants is Ember, which opened at 92 Clarence Street in the Byward Market last June. It can accommodate 105 people in the multi-level dining room, with a front patio for 44 and another on the side set to make its debut next summer. Both will be handicapped accessible. At Ember it is all about sharing and that is precisely what we did. After some drinks, a couple of match milk punches and a chardonnay, we ordered a half dozen Quebec/New Brunswick

oysters, some delicious beef tartare with roasted marrow, spicy crispy tuna, charcoal kissed salmon crudo, wood fired halloumi, zucchini pesto pizza, a 12-ounce char-grilled striploin and for dessert the Turkish lokma, made of leavened and deep fried dough balls, soaked in syrup and coated with cinnamon. Info: www.emberottawa.com

Our "go to" Red Lobster location at 1499 St. Laurent Blvd. continues to bring in the crowds. We had a fabulous meal in the spacious dining room, feasting on freshly boiled Maritime lobsters and savoring the freshly baked cheddar bay biscuits, some lobster bisque and clam chowder to start. One member of our party opted for a shrimp dinner with lobster tail as an add-on. For cocktails we enjoyed the spiked strawberry lemonades. We had just enough room to share the decadent chocolate wave dessert and vanilla ice cream. Info: www.redlobster.ca

One of the things I love about the Ottawa dining scene is the wide choice of diner-style restaurants that serve up good old-fashioned breakfasts. On this trip I discovered Cindy's Restaurant, located in a strip shopping center in an industrial sector of the Ottawa suburb of Nepean. Owner Cindy Shields welcomes all the customers personally, works the cash and serves the meals. My friend Jack and I were impressed with the exceptionally large servings. I went for the Hungry Special, which included three eggs over easy, two slices of bacon, two sausages, ham, home fries, toast, two slices of tomato and a cup of tea. Jack chose the veggie omelette, Breakfast service ends at 11 am and lunch is then served until 2 pm, with more sandwiches, salads, wraps, burgers, chicken tenders and other tasty



Cindy Shields aims to please at Cindy's

items. Find them on Facebook page at fb.me/cindys-restaurantottawa.

I also decided to travel across the bridge to the town of Aylmer in the Gatineau region. The quick 15-minute trip from my Ottawa address brought me to the iconic Dinty's Restaurant, which has been in business for decades. It opens seven days a week for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Co-owner Jim Sourges dined with me and provided a wonderful history lesson of the establishment. I very much enjoyed the popular combo with a few extras: bacon with rye toast, eggs over easy, crispy cubed potatoes, French toast and a cup of tea. You can see their vast and diverse menu at www.dintys.com.

You can read a lot more about these restaurants at <https://mtlrestorap.com/category/ottawa/> <https://mtlrestorap.com/category/ottawa/>

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The char-grilled striploin at Ember