

In French ... C'est magnifique!

The Beach is home to hundreds of restaurants, with most sitting firmly in the casual dining category. Restaurants that are special-occasion worthy are few and far between.

Enter Brussels Bistro — a classic French restaurant that fills that void with enough sophistication to pull off a quiet anniversary dinner or a champagne-toast-filled promotion celebration.

Located in an old house that now sports bright yellow siding, Brussels Bistro faces on to Waverly St. despite its Queen St. address. There are a few tables out front, but most of the action is inside where the yellow theme continues in a simple and sophisticated space decorated with classic French advertising posters. Crisp white tablecloths, upholstered chairs and sparkling oversized wine glasses beckon diners and practically beg to be filled with something from their well-chosen wine list that's heavy on the French, but with decent representation from Canada and the U.S. There's also a nice selec-

DINING OUT

Anne Marie Males

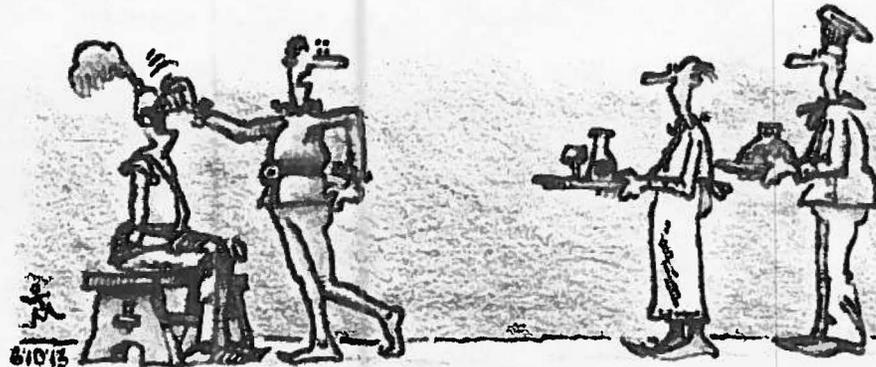
tion of imported beers, heavy on the Belgian, of course.

The menu here is classic French. Not fused or re-invented; just bistro classics prepared pretty much the way you'd expect them to be.

For openers, there are soups, salads or hors d'oeuvres on offer, including the classic French onion soup (\$10), escargots (\$11), a green salad with warmed goat's cheese (\$10), or foie gras with Saskatoon berry compote (\$12). A Nicoise salad with seared yellow fin tuna (\$24) could easily be a main and offers a great alternative for the health-conscious.

I decide to start with the lobster bisque (\$13) while my companion goes with the crab croquettes with onion mushroom slaw (\$12).

I love lobster bisque. It's time consuming to make properly, which is why you see lots of restaurants trying



“M’Lord won’t be taking advantage of lunch – M’Lord isn’t here ...”

to take shortcuts. I detect no evidence of shortcuts here. There's a generous portion of chopped lobster, and the broth is rich and flavourful. It's a little thicker than I like, but all in all, a very respectable version and I am excited for the next course.

The croquettes (crab cakes, really) are clearly a nod to current tastes, but are a decentish version nonetheless and thor-

oughly enjoyable.

There are 10 different flavours of mussels on offer here including curry, beer and one with Pernod, and at just \$19 with a generous serving of frites, this is a popular option we see on many tables.

Mains include Irish salmon (\$28), rack of lamb (\$36) and a bouillabaisse (\$36) that I am sorely tempted to try, but we go instead with the steak

frites (\$34) and the duck confit (\$27).

Again, these are both well-prepared renditions of the classics; the duck crispy and tender as it should be, the steak is prepared as I asked and the frites are a very decent version worth the calories.

There were a few dessert specials but we decided that cheese (\$6 for one piece and \$15 for three) was the way to

BRUSSELS BISTRO

1975A Queen St. E.



416-694-0004

Hours: Dinner, Wednesday
Sunday, 5-10 p.m., closed
Monday and Tuesday
Owner: Roger Wils
Specialty of the house:
Classic French
Dress: Upscale
Mains: \$24-\$36

Licensed

go. Portions are generous: the one piece we ordered turned out to be more than enough for two.

Service was smooth and helpful, the atmosphere reasonably refined (but not dull) and all-in-all, Brussels Bistro offers an enjoyable dining experience.

sundiningout@rogers.com

tedmartincartoons@bellnet.ca