

AN EVENING OF CULINARY DISCOVERY AT BAROLO GRILL

| BY TRACY ELLEN BEARD

There's something magical about dining with someone who shares your appreciation for food, wine, and the backstory of a restaurant or chef. When my daughter-in-law Victoria and I stepped into [Barolo Grill](#), nestled in Denver's upscale Cherry Creek neighborhood, we knew we were in for an extraordinary experience. With its warm ambiance and focus on Northern Italian Piemontese cuisine, Barolo Grill is more than a restaurant—it's a portal to Italy shaped by Owner Ryan Fletter, Executive Chef Darrel Truett, and the staff.

Our evening began with cocktails, and mine was a revelation, The Key to Clarity. Crystal clear, it sparkled in a whiskey glass over a large square ice cube. The bartender explained the milk punch technique. She clarified the milk with the mix of rum agricole, Nonino Moscato Grappa, vanilla, and key lime. This process was as intriguing as the drink itself, which tasted like the lightest, most ethereal key lime pie.

Victoria opted for the Negroni Presto, a ruby-red masterpiece infused with beet CapRock gin, Contratto Vermouth Rosso, and Cynar. Its subtle bitterness balanced perfectly with the rhu-barb bitters, setting the tone for the evening.

The Artistry of Antipasti

We began with the Sofflé di Formaggio, a delicate Parmigiano Reggiano soufflé paired with artichoke and black truffle purée. The flavors were exquisite—earthy yet refined, with the truffle offering a whisper of decadence. Accompanied by a glass of Fallegro Gianni Gagliardo 2020 Piemonte, the wine's delicate floral notes and crisp acidity amplified the soufflé's richness. Next, we savored the Crudo di Ricciola, a luminous dish of thinly sliced amberjack adorned with kumquat, grapefruit, puffed quinoa, and a touch of osetra caviar. The interplay of citrus

brightness, nutty crunch, and saline caviar was divine. Victoria does not care for fish, but when dining with me, she is compelled to taste each dish. To her surprise, and mine, the Crudo di Ricciola was one of her favorites of the evening.

Our third course, the Insalata di Barbabietole, was a vibrant roasted beet salad with whipped goat cheese, pistachios, and Banyuls vinaigrette, beautifully complemented by Esoterra greens. Paired with an Etna Rosato, the wine's minerality and red fruit notes elevated the earthy sweetness of the beets.

A Symphony of Primi Piatti

For our pasta course, Barolo Grill showcased their mastery with two unforgettable dishes. The Risotto was a study in elegance—seven-year-aged Acquerello Carnaroli rice, butter-poached frog legs, salsa verde, and nasturtium. The Risotto was creamy and luxurious, with the salsa verde adding an herbal brightness.

The Agnolotti del Plin—traditional Piemontese pasta filled with veal and Parmigiano Reggiano, was a comforting embrace of savory perfection. Paired with a glass of Langhe Nebbiolo 'Batie' Gianni Gagliardo 2019 Piemonte, the wine's cherry and cranberry notes harmonized beautifully with the veal's richness.

The Grandeur of Secondi Piatti

Victoria and I shared two second courses that exemplified Barolo Grill's ability to balance rustic tradition with refined technique. The Barolo-style braised duck, accompanied by Kalamata olives, roasted potatoes, and seasonal vegetables, was a dish of depth and warmth. The duck was tender, the vegetables perfectly cooked, and the potatoes—crisped in duck fat—were heavenly.

The Bistecca di Manzo, grilled beef tenderloin served with a sweet English pea purée, sautéed







morels, and grilled ramps, was a triumph of seasonal flavors. The tenderloin’s smoky richness paired seamlessly with the Barolo Daniele Conterno 2019 Piemonte, a wine with bright acidity, fine tannins, and hints of cherry and spice.

Dolce Delights

No meal at Barolo Grill is complete without dessert, and we indulged in a quartet of dolce. The Torta di Formaggio, a Castelmagno cheesecake drizzled with lavender honey and toasted hazelnuts, was light yet indulgent. The Panna Cotta, adorned with chocolate sauce and caramel pearls, was a study in silky perfection.

Victoria and I both adored the Crème Brûlée, with its flawless caramelized crust

and creamy custard. But the standout was the Cioccolato, a chocolate olive oil cake paired with chocolate crèmeux and freeze-dried strawberries. The strawberries provided a playful crunch that contrasted beautifully with the cake’s moist richness.

Paired with the desserts, the Moscato d’Asti Vietti 2023 Piemonte brought a delicate sweetness and floral aroma that complemented the lighter desserts, while the Brachetto d’Acqui ‘Pineto’ Marengo 2022 Piemonte, with its berry-forward profile, was the perfect match for the chocolate.

Reflections on Pairing

As we sipped the last of our wines, the sommelier shared a sentiment that stayed with me: “The beauty of a pairing is when the food

and wine are each lifted higher.” That idea echoed throughout our meal. Each pairing, from the Fallegro to the Barolo, amplified the dishes’ flavors, creating moments of discovery and delight.

Dining at Barolo Grill is more than a meal; it’s an immersion into the artistry and heart of Italian cuisine. From the meticulous sourcing of ingredients to the thoughtful wine selections, Ryan Fletter and his team have created a dining experience that bridges the distance between Denver and Piedmont. ❖