



THE MATHESON AND ROOF 106

| BY TRACY ELLEN BEARD

I first experienced Dustin Valette's culinary expertise in September 2017 when my friend Bernadette and I dined at [Valette](#) in Healdsburg, California. I was impressed with the dinner, drinks, artistic presentation, and staff's hospitality and warmth. Since then, I have worked with Dustin and his friends in the industry to promote [restaurants](#) and wineries in the Sonoma and Napa counties for more than five years. During all this time, Dustin and I only communicated via text and phone. When he opened his new restaurant, The Matheson, and rooftop bar, [Roof 106](#), located in downtown Healdsburg, California, it was finally time to meet him in person. I drove down to Sonoma County, and my friend Judy and I headed to Healdsburg.

ROOF 106

Roof 106, located above [The Matheson](#) restaurant, is reachable via staircase or elevator. The rooftop bar boasts an indoor space with a horseshoe-style bar, plenty of tables for dining inside or alfresco, and a Mugnaini wood-fired oven. Chef Brian Best, the chef at Roof 106, uses the wood-fired oven to cook incredible pizzas, delicious appetizers, and tasty small-plate options. The bartenders upstairs craft decadent cocktails using unique spirits, seasonal fruits, herbs, and flowers.

The outdoor space upstairs is cozy and comfortable, with couches and firepits for a warm, relaxed vibe, tables and chairs for more traditional dining, and trees and greenery to create a garden effect. Diners enjoy a birds-eye view of Healdsburg Plaza. Roof 106 is the perfect place for a bite to eat, a drink after work, or a casual place to enjoy a great dinner. Chef Best works with Executive Chef/Owner Dustin to create an exciting seasonal menu for Roof 106. Diners can opt for a light dish of fried squash or something more substantial like a decadent pizza or

steak cooked in the wood-fired oven. There is something on the menu for everyone, and the signature cocktails constantly evolve. The staff also invests the same energy into making creative and tasty non-alcoholic beverages for those that choose not to imbibe.

A COCKTAIL AT ROOF 106

Judy and I arrived early on a Saturday afternoon, so we began upstairs with a cocktail before settling into our table downstairs in The Matheson. Locals and travelers filled the tables both inside and out. I approached the bar and asked for a colorful drink. The bartender suggested the Butterfly Authority, a bright drink made of Buffalo Trace Bourbon, Madeira, blackberries, and thyme. The drink was slightly sweet with a touch of herbaceousness, a fabulous start to the exceptional dinner that followed.

THE MATHESON

Although The Matheson and Roof 106 are Chef/Owner Dustin Valette's newest creations, they are already notable in the culinary industry. Dustin attributes his success to his three top-notch chefs who oversee the kitchen activities at the three venues: Executive Chef Nathan Davis at Valette, Chef Brian Best at Roof 106, and Chef de Cuisine Matt Brimer at The Matheson. He also praises and thanks his Vice President of Operations, Marko Sotto. Chef Brimer collaborates closely with Chef Dustin at The Matheson, and they share the same dedication toward local ingredients.

Judy and I arrived hungry and anxious to try a variety of dishes. When visiting The Matheson, I believe the tasting menu with paired wines is the best choice. Each dish bursts with flavor and is thoughtfully composed.

LOVE THE SPUD

The Osetra Caviar at The Matheson is a perfect example of how a talented chef can turn a simple staple into something marvelous. Shitake mushroom "xo" sauce was the bottom layer and perfectly salted, creamy Yukon gold espuma covered the sauce. Shavings of cured egg and chopped chives garnished the potato, and caviar crowned the dish and finally, a dusting of Piment d'Espelette, a red chili pepper powder from France. The salty caviar elevated the plate with another complementary flavor and texture, and the chili powder finished the whole dish with a touch of heat. I enjoyed this intense potato-flavored dish with a 2018 Arista "Ferrington" Pinot Noir from Anderson Valley. I love potatoes, and my daughter Brittney, a self-proclaimed foodie, loves to poke fun at me for finding such a simple ingredient so satisfying.

TRY IT; YOU MIGHT LIKE IT

My friend Judy is usually up for trying anything new. However, she told me at the beginning of the night that she would not try foie gras. I explained that if prepared well, it is delightful. The night we dined at The Matheson, the tasting menu featured Duck + Shrimp Shumai as one of the courses. This delectable Asian-inspired course boasted a plethora of textures and flavors, combining an excellent balance of salt, savory, soft, chewy, and crunchy. The smooth wonton-like exterior encompassed



shrimp, kimchee, and foie gras. The pouch, crowned with scallions and black sesame seeds, was topped with a delicious Asian sauce. This dish was paired fabulously with a Halleck "Calandrelli VYD" Gewurtztraminer, RRV 2021. Judy was leary, but after one bite, she was in heaven. She told me that the Shumai was her favorite dish of the evening.

The dinner, drinks, atmosphere, and companionship made for a fantastic evening. About mid-way through dinner, Chef Dustin arrived tableside with Marko Sotto; this was the first time I had ever spoken to Chef Dustin in person. He was warm and friendly, like meeting an old friend.

The downstairs bar serves classic cocktails and crafted cocktails derived from modern ideas. This unique back bar is built with suspended cold steel and stocks several varieties of whisky, scotch, bourbon, rye, and hard-to-find spirits. The Matheson also boasts a sake cellar with a range of styles to try.

THE WINE WALL

The Wine Wall encompasses the entire left wall of the restaurant's sitting area. During my conversation with Marko Sotto, he said, "We have 88 wine selections on tap, mostly local wines from Sonoma and Napa, but we have brought in some international wines to bring in variety. All the wines on the wall are available by the taste, half glass, glass, or a carafe. We like it because we can offer different wines to our guests without having to sell them an entire bottle. You can choose and dabble."

When I asked how long the wines last on tap, Chef Dustin chimed in and said, "The system is impressive; it uses argon to pressurize the bottle and push the wine out. It is guaranteed to keep the wine fresh for three months, and on average, we go through a bottle in four days. We decided to do this because when we were putting together the restaurant, we wanted to showcase who we are, not one style, not one genre, but more importantly, the collective passions of so many people. We created a canvas for artisans. Food and wine go hand in hand. You may never hear of a particular petite winery in the region, and the wine could be out of your price range. But here, you can taste an ounce or a glass and not make much of a financial commitment to see if you like it. You can try something different and see if you love it. Some local wineries produce very small volumes, so they can only sell their wine by the bottle, but you can enjoy a splash or a glass and try them all here."

Dinner at The Matheson and Roof 106 provides a memorable evening, but if you are a local, it is a great place to become a regular. ♦

RESTAURANTS

