

## DINNER DATE

## Chianti still an anchor of local fine dining

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Some places have a good reputation for a reason.

Chianti is one.

This northern Italian eatery anchors the southern end of what could be called Shreveport's Magnificent Mile of upscale dining on the trendy section of Line Avenue. But swanky doesn't translate into stuffy here. Chianti cooks up great food and a laid-back mood.

Our waiter on a recent Thursday night started our evening offering drinks — cocktails and wine, to be exact. We didn't ask for a liquor list, instead opting for wine by the glass. (Times are tough, right?)

We both went for red. I chose the Hess Select cabernet sauvignon, while my date asked for a glass of Columbia Crest shiraz. I've got friends who say all reds taste alike, but the differences between these two — both good — were clear.

The cabernet was fruity but full. It started out with a berry flavor and finished smooth.

My date's shiraz, of course, had a harder, spicier kick. Both fared well with our entrees later.

Bread came to the table about the time two glasses of water did. Surprisingly, the basket offered a little variety: crunchy or soft. Both tasted like they were straight out of grandma's kitchen. Even the hard bread felt fluffy in the mouth — like clouds of goodness. And the room temperature butter, i.e. easily spread, was a nice complement.

Appetizers were out of the kitchen in no time. We tried a cup of the soup of the day, which was leek and potato, and an escargot casserole.

Now, we both generally like soup, but my date loved the chef's choice the most. She said it tasted just like a potato, as it should have. I was expecting some chunks of either the root the soup was named for or its onion cousin sidekick. But both were perfectly pulverized. The flavor certainly deserved a thumbs up, but I think I wanted a little more. If this tasted just like a potato, maybe I needed it a little more like french fries, with salt, or more like the baked variety with a little sour cream or cheese?

Escargot — snails — were a new delicacy for us. The casserole wasn't the kind most of us probably eat around here at Sunday

## On the menu

Other items available at Chianti:

- Escargot, \$8.25.
- Cup of soup of the day, \$5.25.
- Hess Select cabernet sauvignon (glass), \$6.50.
- Columbia Crest shiraz (glass), \$8.75.
- Quail dish, \$24.95.
- Snapper special, \$25.95.
- Chocolate brule, \$5.50.
- Slice of house cake, \$5.50.
- Foneseca port, \$7.75.
- Mexican coffee, \$8.95.

dinner. It was about five of the mollusks soaked in butter and herb sauce in sort of a glass mini muffin pan. It came with little forks about the size you'd use to eat oysters on the half shell.

The snails' texture is similar to chewy mushrooms. And we really liked them. We liked them better after we squirted some lemon juice (which they brought out on a plate without our asking) onto them. As my ever-clever date put it: "When there's a lemon next to your seafood, you need to squeeze it." (At least we think they were sea snails.)

For my main course, I chose semi-boneless grilled quail in a port wine demiglace served over polenta. The sauce was to die for. I often avoid ordering quail because it can be so bony. Not so at Chianti. I cleaned my plate.

My date went for the daily special, grilled snapper covered in shrimp and a tomato cream sauce. This dish was perfect. The sauce reminded my date of her aunt's Shrimp Creole, she said. The special was a melding of south Louisiana and Italian cuisine.

For dessert, we chose the house cake and the chocolate mousse brule. The house cake was homemade sponge cake with layers of chocolate and amaretto cream and some Grand Marnier thrown in. This wasn't a dry sponge. This one had soaked up all the chocolate and liqueur goodness. Definitely the best sponge cake I've ever had.

The brule was good, but not the most noteworthy part of the meal. Both desserts paired well

## Your ticket to good dining Chianti

Address: 6535 Line Ave., Shreveport.  
Phone: 868-8866.

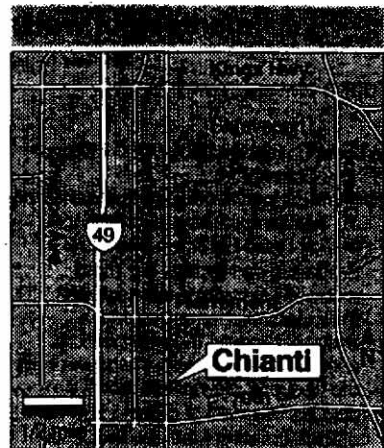
Hours: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday-Friday; 5:30-10 p.m. Sunday-Saturday



Very good



Expensive



Source: Times research

The Times

with after dinner drinks. I had ruby port while my date enjoyed a Kahlua mixed drink dubbed Mexican coffee. That was a waiter's recommendation.

Speaking of the staff, our waiter was friendly if not quite as knowledgeable as we might have wanted. He didn't miss a step but didn't always describe the dishes we asked about.

We may have scarfed down a little more than we would if we didn't have lots of readers to help out, but didn't exactly feel like we would pop after. The fare was surprisingly light.

All-in-all, we'd say Chianti is a classic. The low lighting gives it a classy feel, but the friendly staff and occasional jeans-wearing diners keep things close to earth.

Check out Chianti for a special occasion — because it'll cost that much. Or just make the occasion special and choose Chianti.

Dinner Date is a weekly restaurant review. Negative reviews are based on at least two visits. The Times pays for all meals.

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