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Le Rendez-Vous at the Point marks 1-year point



Le Rendez-Vous at the Point features this dining room fireplace holding copper pots. Owner Maxime Wentzel chooses decor items from France. Photo By Sheila Nero

By SHEILA NERO

Jan. 13, 2015

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Le Rendez-Vous at the Point on Okauchee Lake will toast its one-year anniversary next month. Owner Maxime Wentzel, a Paris native, and Executive Chef Joe Volpe say the restaurant has reached some satisfying milestones.

For one, there's local acceptance of French cuisine in a location that previously was more casual. Also, there's trust in the dining quality, with a core of restaurant regulars.

The setting

Two words: lake and view. In the peak season of summer visitors, boaters can dock at the pier and trek up the short path to the patio, which seats 35. Wentzel's tip for sunset views: stand next to the patio's trellis arch near the front of the restaurant for a long view of water expanse.

In the two dining rooms, white tablecloths and petite lanterns top the tables. A double-sided fireplace offers a shelf where five copper pots line up in graduated sizes. The windows to the lake provide an open, yet snug atmosphere.

The menu

Current signature dishes include the Seared Diver Boat Scallops, Shrimp-Crawfish Etouffee, Braised Colorado Lamb Shank and the Bouillabaisse. In 2015, plans call for menu updates at intervals and a Sunday brunch to begin in the spring.

Menu options include Prince Edward Island Mussels, Caramelized Onion Tart, Steak Frites (grilled Black Angus flank steak), Grilled Filet Mignon, a Friday fish fry and Sunday-only crepes. Entrees include a warm baguette and butter.

Of the 24 wines offered, 10 are French. A full menu is also served at the bar, where dinners can be ordered to go.

The background

"I've always loved food and I've always cooked, even when I was 11 years old," Wentzel says.

He began visiting Lake Country with his mother as a youth. Wentzel has a well-rounded background in restaurants, including three years managing his mother's Paris brasserie, or relaxed restaurant. His location formerly housed Bertrand's Point Comfort Place, which briefly became Paz's Point Comfort in 2013.

At the one-year mark, Wentzel's philosophy remains, "Keep making the right changes at the right time, while maintaining dining quality." As with many newer restaurants, there are still a few works in progress at Le Rendez-Vous, such as its website.

Volpe, from Milwaukee's East Side, is an experienced chef with roots in Milwaukee restaurants, including Tess.

The customers

Attire is casual. Some boaters go home and change clothes before a summer dinner, while others arrive right off the pier. Recently, one couple chose to sit at a table, while another pair opted to eat dinner at the bar, and a male customer took dinner to go.

December brought a flurry of holiday parties; groups of up to 40 can be accommodated. A verbal children's menu is available on request.

The Restaurant Scout profiles Lake Country restaurants to describe ambience, cuisine, price range and clientele. This is a destination feature rather than a food review. Send questions or comments to restaurantscout@gmail.com.

Good to know

Le Rendez-Vous at the Point

Address: N52 W35002 Lake Drive, Okauchee Lake

Phone: (262) 468-4038

Fare: French, with nods to other influences

Reservations: Recommended

Hours: 5 to 9 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday; 5 to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday. Bar opens at 4 p.m.

Price range: \$4.50 for soup du jour (cup), such as turtle and black bean. \$27 for a grilled 8-ounce Filet Mignon. \$32 for a Tuesday special of Alaskan King Crab Legs.

Wheelchair access: Yes

Gluten-free options: Yes

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