



Le Cordon Bleu Bistro

Ottawa's Five-Diamond rated restaurant reinvents itself **BY LESLIE JONES**

If I had closed my eyes, the languid strains of the piano accordion and velvety texture of cream-covered scallops lingering on my tongue would have convinced me that I was in a bistro on the banks of the Seine. Yet I was worlds away, sipping sauvignon blanc in Sandy Hill at the latest incarnation of what has been one of the highest-rated restaurants in Canada.

[Each week, the Bistro will feature a new original menu showcasing its savoury home-style cuisine, prepared using fresh, local ingredients by a talented team of professional chefs.](#)

Le Cordon Bleu Bistro @ Signatures, as its name suggests, is the love child of two immensely popular eateries that the world-famous cooking school operated until recently: Signatures, Ottawa's bastion of haute cuisine and the city's sole recipient of CAA's exclusive Five-Diamond rating, and the Bistro Cordon Bleu, a bustling lunch-hour hotspot.

The concept behind the new format is to expand access to Le Cordon Bleu's culinary talents by merging the best of both operations. Each week, the Bistro will feature a new original menu showcasing its savoury home-style cuisine, prepared using fresh, local ingredients by a talented team of professional chefs. The difference is not what's on the plate but what it costs: main courses average only \$25 each.

Our dinner in the intimate dining room at the historic Munross Mansion was spectacular and perfectly paced, with gracious servers whose impeccable sense of timing made it seem as if

they could read minds.

Our sommelier recommended a 2008 Sancerre, a delicate white wine from the Loire Valley, to accompany our fish-focused palette. Its dry, citrus tones were a perfect contrast to our rich starters: escargot sautéed in garlic butter and served in a tiny bread bowl, and a creamy purée of salted Gaspésie cod christened with a thin spear of battered fish.

Our main courses were equally exquisite: seared scallops set in a sea of roasted marinated peppers and thyme-touched cream sauce, topped with wafer-thin crisps, and a delicate filet of sole draped across a bed of shrimp, nestled on a cocotte of parsnips, carrots, Brussels sprouts and green beans.

The evening came to a perfect end when we shared desserts of crème brûlée with red berry compote and airy chocolate-covered profiteroles filled with decadent homemade amaretto and mint chocolate-chip ice cream. There's no doubt the artists at Le Cordon Bleu have come up with yet another recipe for success.

For more information or to make a reservation, visit www.bistroatsignatures.com.

DO YOU HARBOUR DREAMS OF CULINARY GRANDEUR?

Ever wonder what it would be like to study at the hands of a master chef? Find out more about the wide range of short courses offered at Le Cordon Bleu Ottawa Culinary Arts Institute and what it's like to attend a gourmet cooking class, in the Member's Guide section of an upcoming issue of *CAA Magazine*.