

Lolita's Lust

513 Danforth Ave. Toronto
Open for Dinner 7 Nights
416-465-1751
www.lolitalust.ca

Gone are the days of wondering if Lolita's Lust is really an adult bookstore. Glass doors that open in the summer to create the feeling of a larger patio have replaced the painted green windows. This funky bar and restaurant was opened about ten years ago by Johnny K, but for the past three years this has been the domain of Sam Scanga. Raised in the restaurant industry this is old hat for Scanga, and with Sydney Bleicher back on the floor it is a great mix of the old and the new.



Mabel and I are given a booth and promptly order the martinis that are the restaurant's namesakes; the absolute lust – really the marguerita of martinis, and the Lolita – a new twist on the old French martini, both delish at \$8.95. As we sip our martinis Sam fills us in on what's new, and what's to change. The windows will see some covering for the winter, but nothing as severe as a coat of paint.

The room itself has not changed a lot, but then it didn't need to. It is funky and intimate. The electronic screens on the walls still sport the work of Malcom Brown, and the glass shelves behind the bar are still tilted at a rather alarming angle. No doubt causing some diners to wonder if it is the shelves, or the effects from the martinis. Wandering back to the washrooms you can sneak a peek into the coach house, a retrofitted brick garage that expands the restaurant's capacity and makes for a unique space. Upstairs is still the Chinchilla lounge, available for private parties and corporate events. Probably the only such space on the Danforth.



The menu is a la carte, presented as small plates \$8 - \$21, large dishes \$15 - \$30, and sides \$4 - \$6. This affords Mabel any number of vegetarian combinations. But after choosing the beet and fennel salad to start, she opts for the large dish “crespelle”, a lemon scented crepe filled with feta and spinach and topped with fresh basil rose. I think it sounds like a strange combination of flavours, but when it arrives it is wonderful, the lemon providing a fresh hint in delightful contrast with the home-style Italian sauce. But, before I go on, the feta cheese in her beet salad must be mentioned – so creamy!



I have the lobster dumplings and mushroom salad, a popular dish I am told, and why not? Such an interesting twist on the dumpling, the miso chile sauce provides a hint of spice. On Sydney's recommendation I order what she says is the signature dish; filet of beef with a gorgonzola cream sauce. When it arrives I am amazed by how thick the cut is, it must be at least two inches, and so tender. The gorgonzola is a sinful addition to this dish. Mabel and I share our sides, the ever popular feta scalloped potatoes, a wonderfully garlicky rapini, and maple glazed squash. It could be argued that the squash is too sweet, but Mabel and I would not be amongst the supporters of such an argument, we think it is fantastic. The first few minutes after our food is brought we have nothing to say to each other but "mmmmm".



I am charmed by the presentation of the wine list, not simply “red” and “white” where diners are left to their own devices to sort out one wine from another. Lolita’s presents the wines by flavour; “black currants and cedar”, “berries spice and earth” and “cherries and plums” head the red wine selections, and prices range from a modest \$35 to \$300. Whites are categorized as “green apple, butter and vanilla” and “grapefruit, gooseberry and mineral”, and priced from \$35 to \$175. Not just different, but also a helpful way to organize wines. Mabel and I of course opt for red, I sometimes wonder if it hasn’t replaced blood in our veins.

Stuffed to the gills from dinner we know that we cannot report on a full meal without dessert and so allow Sydney to choose for us. “Please,” we beg her, “not too much!” She decides to ignore our pleas for when it arrives dessert is a platter of Lolita’s flourless chocolate cake, bread pudding and lemon tart. We have deviated here from the norm as they do offer a vanilla crème Brule and we are not having it. We both groan in anticipation of the pain eating all of this will surely bring, but we take our job seriously and so dig in.

The flourless chocolate cake is a staple dessert, a remnant of the days of Johnny K, and it is still wonderful. But only recently have I discovered that bread pudding is not a revolting and stodgy pudding-like concoction developed to serve to British school children as some form of punishment. It is fast making its way up my list of favorite desserts, and this one is no different. The lemon tart is served in individual portions and is light and tangy. Mabel and I begin by sharing everything, but by the end we are drawing lines in the whipped cream between the tarts to be sure that it is evenly shared out, anything else could have resulted in out and out war.

Due to our excessive fullness we decide the only sensible thing to do is to have a digestif. I am a creature of habit and so order a Grand Mariner. Mabel asks for a Baileys and Grant the bartender is over in a flash to tell her about his own personal after dinner drink recipes. The wing dinger is called, I believe, a “hammer” and is a mixture of vodka, frangelico, whisky, baileys and kalhua. Mabel is not brave enough to try this, and instead has a frangelico and baileys, I can’t resist trying it, further “mmm”s” are exchanged.



Mabel and I leave feeling full, warm and fuzzy, our dinner before tax and tip came in at around \$175, including our martinis, wine and after dinner drinks. **All in all this is still one of the best options on the Danforth if you don’t want souvlaki.**



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