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Don Appetit! Lobster Monster's Maritime Feast

March 31, 2015 posted by **Don Douloff**

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BY DON DOULOFF



Lobster Monster is a labour of love spearheaded by the husband and wife team of Steve and Marianne Woo.

Inspired by their respective food experiences — in Marianne's case, childhood memories of scrumptious East Coast lobster dinners, and in Steve's case, a love of food nurtured by his Montreal

upbringing — the pair decided to open a restaurant devoted to the Maritime crustacean.

Voilà — Lobster Monster, which roared to life last August, in north Toronto, on Yonge Street north of Lawrence Avenue.

It's a comfortable neighbourhood spot outfitted with pale green walls, soft lighting and flickering votive candles and tastefully designed to evoke the Maritimes — driftwood; ocean-themed photos; lobster traps. It's fun and welcoming and classy all at once.

Heading up the kitchen is John Fortune, who hails from Truro, N.S., and brings plenty of Maritime flair to his plates.

Lobster bisque is thick and rich and loaded with tender shellfish, while baby clams and chunks of potato pack a creamy, New England-style chowder.

More tender lobster tops a spinach salad dressed in creamy garlic vinaigrette. Mention must also be made of the bruschetta. Made from chopped tomatoes, garlic, cilantro, onions, olive oil and lemon juice, it's miles above ordinary.



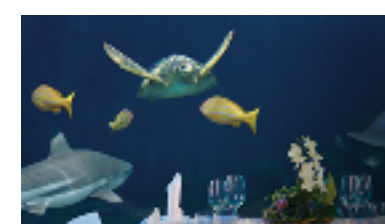
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And now the main event. Weighing in at about 2 lbs., the lobster is steamed until it is tender and sweet. Huge, steamed Alaskan king crab legs are equally succulent. Quickly, the provided metal bucket fills with empty shells as our group inhales the carefully excavated meat that we've dipped into melted

butter.

Fortune also does lobster sandwiches two ways, both served on a croissant, and both very generous and tasty. In one, he deftly sautées the shellfish with diced green pepper. The other is a more traditional cold lobster salad dressed with mayo, celery, peppers and cilantro.

We end our Maritime feast with three desserts made in-house: warm apple pie; a stellar carrot cake created from a 100-year-old recipe; and a fun, gooey construction of brownies, chocolate crackled vanilla ice cream, whipping cream, Skor bar bits, caramel and chocolate syrup.

Steve and Marianne will consider group buyouts (especially on Mondays, when the restaurant is typically closed) for Lobster Monster, which seats 50 people plus another three at the bar.

— Don Douloff has been a restaurant critic for over 25 years and, during that time, has critiqued almost 1,000 eateries. In 1988, he studied the fundamentals of French cuisine at Ecole de Cuisine La Varenne, in Paris, France. During his time in France, he furthered his gastronomic education by visiting the country's bistros, brasseries and Michelin-starred temples of haute cuisine. He relishes exploring the edible universe in his native Toronto and on his travels throughout Canada and abroad.

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