

Dining Out

BLACK POWDER TAVERN

1164 Valley Forge Rd., Wayne
610-293-9333 • BlackPowderTavern.com



Beet Salad



Pork Wings



Hand-dipped Ricotta Cheese Dessert



Veal Burger



PHOTOS: BETSY BARRON FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY

Lise Monty

It's always good to honor our nation's history, and Black Powder Tavern does it with a bang and with class in its well-preserved building that has stood strong since 1746. The popular restaurant's name salutes the black powder munitions stash kept there for George Washington and the Continental Army trying to survive an earlier horrendous winter, the one of 1777-78 at nearby Valley Forge.

Period sconces and varied images of our first President decorate the warm wood-paneled walls that extend up to the high paneled ceiling. Subtly striped draperies frame tall, large paned-glass windows. The wide-plank, reclaimed barn-wood floor and sturdy wood tables with roomy chairs to match enhance ye-olde-tavern feeling. Two antique armoires double as conversation pieces and service areas. One is in the bar area, the other in the separate Anthony Wayne Room, available for private parties. The large bar area, separated from the main dining room by a glass wall, includes several tables for dining.

The updated restaurant, formerly Winberie's and owned by Select Restaurants, opened last October. Regional Manager Sam Sberna says business has been going "extremely well." When we visited, it was hopping with a high-energy vibe filling the upscale/homey atmosphere.

From the friendly valet attendants to the gracious host and attentive waiters, the non-stop excellent service impressed the three of us. Valet parking is free and available at lunch, too.

Raising Spirits

My two companions happily sipped their well-chilled *Tanqueray Martinis* (\$8.95), toasting them with a clink of their classic long-stemmed glasses. It was daunting but fun to check out the massive menu of brew choices: two dozen-plus on tap, from American rotating drafts to Belgian and IPA drafts, plus Belgian ciders and bottled IPAs, along with pilsners, stouts and porters. A cool draft of *DeSchutes Mirror Pond Pale Ale* (\$6), one of the Portland, Oregon craft brewery's favorites, delighted, thanks to its seriously hoppy flavor and aroma.

Plenty of cocktail and wine choices, too, plus "adult" desserts like white chocolate and apple liqueur fondue, a special when we visited. You'll also find liqueur-laced milkshakes like the *Night Rider* made with Kahlua and Ghirardelli chocolate syrup or the *Candy Cane*, kicked up with Peppermint Schnapps.

Hearty, Tasty, Satisfying

The broad range and variety of popular American dishes, many creatively interpreted—shaved and grilled Broccoli Salad, for example—means there's something for everyone. Large portions prevail, even when they're "small plates," which we found perfect for sharing. There was no resisting the crusty, Italian-style bread, which we were told comes from Tribeca and is baked in-house.

The *Pork Wings* (\$11) "small plate" inevitably led to one-liners about pigs flying as we sampled the hearty and tasty serving of two

bone-in portions of lean, tender pork in a robust Hoisin sauce, all sweet and salty, plus a sprinkle of sesame seeds. The perfect partner: a side of tangy cole slaw. *Melted Cambozola in Cast Iron* (\$10), a crowd-pleasing blend of caramelized onions and mushrooms topped with gooey cheese, came with crisp herb-enhanced flatbread. Yum! The sophisticated *Beet Salad* (\$10) won us over with its uniform slices of golden and red beets, apples and fennel with a sprinkle of pumpkin seeds, dressed with a tangy yogurt dill sauce and crumbled Gorgonzola.

Other appetizers: traditional mussels, Revolutionary (code for spicy) mussels, onion soup dumplings, calamari, hummus, chicken wings and polenta fries. Several soups—Lafayette's onion, for one—and salads, too.

Winning Entrées

Sam Adams Pork Osso Bucco (\$22) showed that the Americanized pork-braised-in-beer interpretation can be as delicious as the Italian veal-and-white wine classic. Robust and full-flavored, the fall-off-the-bone meat sat on a heap of rich mashed potatoes

with slender carrot sticks and green beans adding color and crunch.

From the sea, *Chilean Sea Bass* (\$29) scored, the moist fillet topped with sundried tomatoes, shiitake mushrooms and scallions in a fresh basil reduction sauce. Well-matched partners: plump spears of al dente asparagus and a Kansas rice medley—white, brown and wild.

We agreed you can't visit an all-American tavern without trying a burger and were happy we did. The *Veal Burger* (\$15), a hefty patty of quality meat, was topped with sautéed peppers and onions, a bright marinara sauce and fried provolone.

Other specials included Santa Fe Porterhouse steak, tuna Oscar, chicken and shrimp Chasseur, and grilled lobster tails. On the Large Plate menu: New York strip steak, char-grilled marinated flank steak, cedar-plank salmon, and three popular carryovers from the Winberie's menu: chicken Marsala, fish and chips, and chicken pot pie.

The Burgers & Sandwiches list includes a pork hoagie, hot dog, honey-mustard chicken sandwich, smoked-salmon pastрами Reuben and a black bean vegetarian burger.

Sweet Satisfaction

We were intrigued by the *Hand-dipped Ricotta Cheese* (\$7) dessert—we tried it and absolutely loved it. The whipped scoop of soft creaminess sweetened with honey and studded with amaretto crumbs and salted almonds was delectable. Crisp pizzelles added the perfect crunch. It was relatively light compared to the *Toll House Pie* (\$7), a wedge of warm richness topped with ice cream, roasted pecans and chocolate fudge.

Other temptations: Valley Forge campfire S'mores, chocolate ganache and Franklin Fountain ice cream of the day. And, of course, those adult milkshakes.

Warm Weather Thoughts

When the time finally comes for al fresco dining—and it can't come soon enough—the patio will be ready to greet you. ♦

Owner: *Select Restaurants*

Dinner: *Monday-Thursday, 4 to 10 p.m.*

Friday & Saturday, 4 to 11 p.m.

Sunday, 2 to 9 p.m. Bar open one hour later.

Lunch: *Monday-Saturday, 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.*

Sunday Brunch: *10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.*