

españa

restaurant & tapas bar

With its artfully prepared Old World Cuisine, España delights locals and tourists alike

BY KAREN MILLER • PHOTO BY WILLIAM RASER



Every occasion I have to eat dinner at España always seems like a special event. Whether with friends or family, for business or for pleasure, España is one of the most delightful restaurants on Amelia Island. Its Old World cuisine from Spain and Portugal, artfully prepared by owner and chef Roberto Pestana, along with his wife, Marina, is sure to please any palate, from tapas to salads, entrees, and even desserts.

Recently I met my friend Eileen at España for dinner; we hadn't seen each other for quite a while and had a lot of catching up to do. España is a great place to linger and chat over tapas and wine, and our handsome

server suggested the house red, a Chilean Pinot Noir that is very fruity, light bodied and dry. Our waiter also recommended that we share the tapas special, Portabello Mushrooms stuffed with Slivers of Beef, Peppers, and Onions, served with a brown sauce and topped with goat cheese and capers. This appetizer was incredibly delicious. The sauce was quite rich and savory, and the goat cheese was just barely melted, served at the perfect temperature for best flavor.

Since we gals love to share our meals, we decided on España's Andalusian Salad, a fresh blend of romaine, tomatoes, onion, hearts of palm, and olives, dressed in España's famous vinaigrette and topped with Serrano Ham. As a special treat, the chef added a few shavings of Manchego cheese, and this salad was superb! Along with España's homemade bread, this could be a meal on its own.

But Eileen and I couldn't stop there. We both agreed to order entrees that we hadn't tried before: for Eileen, it was Lamb Chops, and for me, the Shellfish Casserole. The lamb chops, or Carnero, consisted of a six-bone rack of lamb, encrusted with black peppercorns, then grilled and topped with a port wine reduction sauce. It was spectacular.

The shellfish casserole, or Cazuela de Mariscos, was served bouillabaisse-style, with its light and fabulous seafood broth brimming with clams, shrimp, scallops, mussels, calamari, and lobster. A side dish of Spanish saffron rice was just the perfect addition to help sop up all that extraordinary sauce, along with the homemade bread. Eileen and I agreed that we couldn't decide which dish was better, so we shared them both, and even had some to take home for lunch the next day.

España offers some wonderful dessert specials, so we decided to share their Tiramisu, cleverly presented in an oversized wine glass, with ladyfingers, mascarpone cheese, espresso coffee, and whipped cream. We also ordered a cup of espresso on the side, along with a glass of Ferriera Ruby Porto, both pairing splendidly with the Tiramisu. Wow. What a way to end a very special meal! España is open for dinner every night of the week, and be sure to visit their outdoor garden, boasting tomatoes, herbs, and peppers grown especially for España's diverse menu offerings.