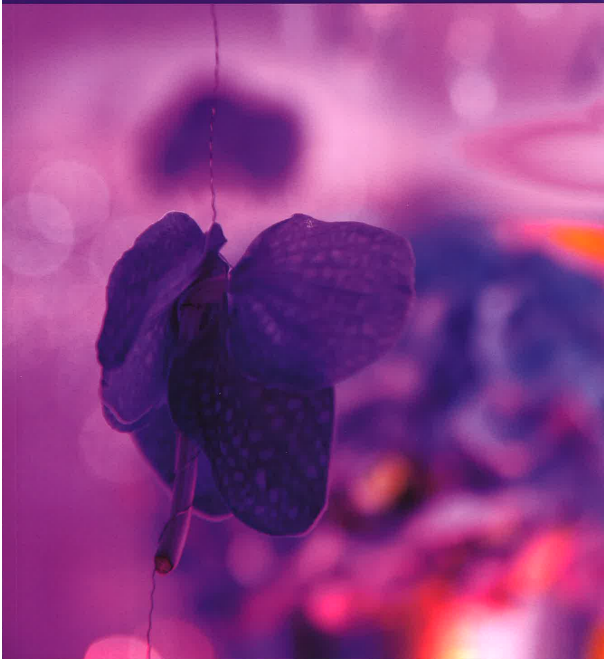


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How to marry a millionaire... or at least dine like one!

Reflections of Provence on Greenwich Harbor... at l'escale

Having just returned from the south of France, I was anxious to see if *l'escale's* new culinary team, headed up by gifted Chef Frederic Kieffer, would send my taste buds back to one of my favorite places in the world. Dining al fresco in the exclusive waterfront setting, yacht-side on Greenwich Harbor at the Delamar, meaning "by the sea," was the first plus of the night. The champagne toast of Veuve Clicquot was the next.

I WAS LOST IN THOUGHTS of Côte d'Azur glamour, when the restaurant's Director of Operations, David Fletcher, formerly of the elite Café Boulud, handed me one of the signature cocktails of the house, *How to Marry A Millionaire*. Was he reading my mind? The drink, a dance of fresh berries subtly infused with lime juice, Grey Goose vodka and a hint of St. Germain crowned by a lychee fruit, evoked the joie de vivre I indulged in when I was winning and dining my way from the Riviera to

Provence and Paris, and I could feel myself happily slipping back to my springtime reverie.

The cuisine of Provence is light, distinctive in flavor and seasoned with a freshness that is rooted in sun-drenched country landscapes and a brilliant blue sea. Think colorful harvests and a brilliant blue sea. Think colorful harvests that bombard the senses... tree-picked fruits, vine-ripened vegetables – and wines – farm raised, free range poultry, beef and lamb, graced with bouquets of aromatic herbs... cheese, rich with secrets, and seafood newly caught. Add

oven-warm baguettes and desserts that defy the sweetest descriptions, and you'll get an idea of the high expectations I had for this reinvented Greenwich restaurant.

Menus in hand our party of three chose our dinners, careful to sample something different with each selection. Everything sounded très appetizing. For starters, we ordered the tuna tartar, bathed in lime and finished with roe and avocado, the flame-broiled giant prawns glazed in garlic and olive paste – a huge hit – and the



Fromage de Chevre & Artichaut Crus – garlic marinated goat cheese served in a mini mason jar, accompanied by a wonderfully dressed frisée, raw and fried artichokes and olive bread toasts – a deliciously innovative twist on a classic goat cheese salad. Magnifique!

Special culinary delights are an integral part of the French table, with the chefs serving up an amuse bouche, without fanfare, to their guests. Our hosts surprised us with a bowl of their delicate Soupe de Moule, a saffron mussel soup seasoned with a medley of leeks, carrots, and onions and served with parmesan twists, along with a refreshing glass of Rosé that whispered the time-honored secrets of France's award-winning vintners.

Our entrées celebrated traditional French dishes, simply and perfectly prepared by a skilled chef who clearly knew his way around his Provençal kitchen. The Cote d'Agneau Grilles, succulent lamb chops paired with warmed, herbed tomatoes and smashed fingerling potatoes, a breast of duck, soaring with a seasoned sauce that enhanced each flavorful bite, and a melt-in-your-mouth halibut, sautéed in white wine and saffron and served with arti-

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choke notes, were equally delectable. Generous glasses of velvety smooth Châteaufort-de-Pape and Pinot Noir complemented our dinner – and paid well-deserved compliments to *l'escalade's* outstanding wine cellar.

Joining Chef Kieffer in the kitchen, Chef de Cuisine Henri Donneaux, former chef/owner of Café Lola in Fairfield, and veteran Pastry

Chef Wendy Young Laurent, named Connecticut's Best Pastry Chef in 2010 by *Connecticut Magazine*, bring years of culinary excellence to the table, talents not lost on our trio of tasters when we dined on their innovative cuisine at *l'escalade*.

They tantalized us with a buffet of desserts, including a light-as-air Black & White Chocolate Soufflé with a pistachio sauce, a decadent Vanilla Crème Brûlée, trimmed with butter crunch heaven, Banana Beignets, France meets New Orleans in a half-healthy, totally delicious fruit that begged to be dipped in the chef's house made chocolate sauce, the Dame Blanche, a long legged brownie and ice cream sundae that taunted our spoons, and cookies, sugar cloud puffs baked on premises.

Sufficiently sated, we sipped golden Sauterne and looked around at our fellow patrons, well-heeled, impeccably dressed ladies and gents who all, admittedly, looked like a million dollars. We agreed that this was definitely a must-see and be-seen, summer-hot, dining venue. We raised our glasses with a heartfelt "vive la France" to Greenwich's haut-est port of call, *l'escalade*, and called it a night. ☐