



Four Stars for Ill Forks: Chef's Table a fantastic success



Submitted by [Theresa Carter](#) on February 3, 2012 - 4:28pm

Wow. That word was repeated often at Chef's Table at [Ill Forks](#). Chicago's newest steakhouse was the consummate host at our [monthly event](#) that features the city's great restaurants.

Mark and Raymond greeted guests with their choice of a Sanford Pinot Noir or Terlato Pinot Grigio. We mixed, we mingled, and when everyone had arrived we sat down and were immediately served warm bread and then a trio of appetizers.



Appetizer Trio: Beef Croustade, Bacon Wrapped Scallop, Crab Cake

This was a trio of deliciousness. The tenderloin was tender, the scallop was buttery, the crab cake actually had crab. Wow.

Next was the Ill Forks Salad:



This salad was surprising for everyone. "I don't like mixed greens and I like this." "I don't like bleu cheese and I like this." What separated the Ill Forks salad from others was the dressing. It's made with roasted walnuts and has an almost smoky flavor, which makes this dish more complex and intriguing than others with similar ingredients.

Our entree was another sampler:





There was a collective gasp when this dish was served. Even though we knew what was coming, the portion sizes and the presentation were beyond our expectations. The sea bass was tender and the tenderloin with red wine sauce was prepared perfectly. The fried prime rib and mashed potatoes were a few gazillion steps above any country fried steak combination I've ever had. Ill Forks originated in Texas, so this is one of their specialties. One of our guests, who is also from Texas, exclaimed that you don't *fry* prime rib, you fry round steak! She loved it. We loved it. The mashed potatoes were homemade-chunky, and the special seasonings of cumin and coarse ground black pepper gave a flavor that was well seasoned without being overpowering. This was paired with Markham Merlot, a standby versatile enough to complement all three.

Wow.

Then came dessert.



The Texas Pecan Cake, served with fresh blueberries and candied pecans, was light and, as some of the guests said, would be perfect as a wedding cake. The mini-bread pudding with its caramel sauce was delightful. With this we drank Remy Martin 1738 Cognac, which was impressively smooth and cut through the sweetness of the desserts.

Wow.

But the biggest "wow" of the evening was the camaraderie, the shared appreciation of fine food and drink, and an environment that made it possible. Mark and Raymond were on top of everything from start to finish. Chef Tommy Nevill explained each course and made the guests feel right at home. It was, simply put, a perfect experience and no one could have asked for anything more.

Thank you, Ill Forks, for giving us a night filled with "Wow".