Heads Up Report: III Forks at Village of Gulfstream in Hallandale

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By Steve Cabeza

For this week's "Head's Up" Report for *the Food for Thought Radio Show*, the fine folks at t.b.a. (the buzz agency) set up a tasting for me at III Forks Steakhouse at the Village of Gulfstream, so a hearty thanks goes out to Julie because the experience was fantastic!

There are 7 III Forks locations sprinkled around the country, including a few in Florida. For the last 5 store openings, they have used the same corporate chef to ensure those openings went smoothly and brand continuity was respected. His name is Tommy Neville, and he is the head chef and proprietor at the III Forks Steakhouse at the Village of Gulfstream.

[Read my cocktail review of III Forks to learn about the fabulous martini selection!]

The first thing that you notice when you come through the door is the tasteful and dark décor, but I expected as much. What I did not expect was the visually

impressive hall-of-wine! To the right of the entrance is the lounge, and were you to proceed straight ahead and not veer into the lounge like me, you would walk—literally—between two walls of wine in ceiling-to-floor glass cases. It makes a killer first impression, and III Forks bills itself as having over 1,500 wines in their collection.

Tommy was an enthusiastic and gracious host, and he asked what I wanted to eat or what I was in the mood for. Everything I saw other diners eating looked good, but I read *Kitchen Confidential*, so I demurred to Tommy's decision on what to bring out, considering his choices would be the basis for what we would talk about on air later. I was glad I did!

My first appetizer was Beef Croustades, which consists of chunks of tender prime filet mignon atop freshly made garlic crostini, with a light and complimentary mustard sauce drizzled over the top. This could have been a meal for a lot of people, like my mother, or most dates. They literally melt in your mouth. Tommy also included a Crabcake St. Francis appetizer. A jumbo lump crabcake patty, browned crispy on top, with a sauce consisting of shallots, celery, onions, butter, and a Creole mustard blend. Outstanding taste and textures, my mother would love it, hopefully as much as I did!

The main course was a breathtaking bone-in ribeye, accompanied by 6-Cheese Potatoes, and fresh tomatoes & scallions, a complimentary III Forks exclusive. I asked Tommy to serve the meat as he suggests, and it came out in a little on the medium rare side, and I cannot imagine eating that superbly-flavored and perfectly cooked cut of meat any other way. Excelsior!

Black Bart's Bounty 2006 (the last year it was produced) is what suggested with my steak, and I the bouquet before the cork was all the way out! It blossomed nicely by the time the steak made it's entrance.

Tommy tells me that III Forks does all their own butchering on premises.

Everything (all sauces, gravies, stock, etc.) is made from scratch, freshly prepared in-house. I am here to tell you that the loves come shining through.

And for those out there who stay away from higher-end steakhouses because of the pretention and the a-la-carte approach, be aware that pretention does not exist at III Forks, nor does arrogance. No, it's more like confident and fun-loving cockiness. The service was 5-star (Joanne you rock!). The food was outstanding. It was indeed a-la-carte. But there was a decided atmosphere of "fun" and controlled-enjoyment, mixed with austere and conservative mischief in the air which is not something you usually find at high-end steakhouses. The price was better than fair (steaks from $19.95 to $39.95), and the inspired martini selection (12 total) will have me coming back often!

Get out to III Forks soon before the secret is out, and tell Tommy that Steve sent you, he's a cool cat! III Forks is located at the Village at Gulfstream, 501 Silks Run, Suite 1130, Hallandale Beach, FL, 33009. (954) 457-3920.

Find out where Steve is going next on the Thursday night Food for Thought Show live on WWNN 1470 am 6-8 p.m.