

## DINING OUT

## Elegant dining

King Street Trio on University offers fine food, fair prices and a laid-back atmosphere

BY TREVOR CHARLES  
FOR NIGHTLIFE

There's an air of breezy sophistication at King Street Trio on University, a fine Waterloo destination that owes its long-winded name to its roots in downtown Kitchener.

The move was a definite step up for Trio, and the nickname is so much easier. The atmosphere here is relaxed and casually chic, with vibrant yellow walls and an inviting, free-form bar. The split-level dining room is spacious with high ceilings, and the tables are well placed. There's a general feeling of openness, making this an ideal rendezvous for grand entrances or intimate gatherings.

Owner Brian Plouffe is quick to point out that the vision he has realized for his restaurant is upscale, but he says it's a

slight departure from fine dining.

So what's the difference? Not much really, but the portions are a bit larger than most high-enders. And you can have a delightful lunch entree that's well presented and reliably good for under \$15.

The menu offers a creative combination of Euro-Med and domestic cuisine with a decidedly French accent.

Executive chef Ray Isbister, whose resumé includes Toronto's trendy Left Bank, prepares all the sauces and stocks in Trio's kitchen. And his team uses only certified Angus beef in all recipes.

Trio's offers one of the region's most appealing midday menus. And it just happens to include my all-time favourite appetizer: shrimp Pernod. This dazzling dish is an artistic arrangement of jumbo shrimps and julienne vegetables with leeks and red peppers in an aromatic Pernod cream, elegantly spilling from a delicate filo nest (\$10). It's simply irresistible.

The southwestern style corn chowder is a substantial blend of tender niblets with cubed potatoes and herbs infused with chipotle peppers and sour cream (\$5). And the velvety baked brie in phyllo is a colourful creation finished with a berry coulis, fresh greens and crispy toasts (\$10).

Other appetizers include escargot bourgignon (\$6), smoked salmon carpaccio (\$9), bacon-wrapped scallops (\$10), and oysters on the half-shell with a trio of sauces (\$13).

If you're undecided, try the tapas platter with three different appetizers that change every week (\$9).

On this particular day, the sampler included smoked salmon antojitos, chicken sate sticks and red pepper hummus with grilled pita wedges.

The next course on the menu includes some familiar choices like caesar salad with pancetta and asiago (\$7), and baby



spinach Dijon salad (\$8). But if you have a taste for the imaginative, how about confit duck salad on greens with apricots, chestnuts and maple dressing (\$15).

The goat cheese potato salad is truly original. Circling a small mound of greens were half a dozen crispy-fried rosti potato rounds topped with a creamy blend of grilled goat cheese and roasted garlic (\$9). The result was quite tasty, although this dish is more starter than salad.

For lunch there's blackened catfish with jalapeno yogurt (\$11), veal stroganoff on spatzle (\$13), baked salmon wrapped in pancetta with tarragon mustard sauce (\$14), and grilled wild mushroom and goat cheese quesadillas (\$9).

Where's the beef? There's an option for every appetite, from an eight-ounce flank steak (\$16) to filet mignon (\$25), to a 12-ounce strip loin (\$30), all grilled to order.

The penne arabiatta was noticeably milder than some, but it was nicely prepared in just enough tangy tomato sauce

and crowned with chopped fresh basil (\$10).

We also tried the Caribbean-style pork loin, a sizable serving of tender, lean pork prepared in jerk spices and topped with mango salsa. With a side of roasted red peppers and zucchini, this was a hearty meal for \$12.

The evening menu features these and other options for a few dollars more. How about monkfish thermidor with gnocchi, artichoke hearts and bacon (\$24) or an eight-ounce sirloin steak topped with two shelled lobster tails (\$33)?

For attention to detail, laid-back elegance, satisfying portions and fair prices for upscale dining, King Street Trio always leaves a good taste in my mouth. It remains a personal favourite.

To enhance the dining experience, there's a piano player on Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday evenings, and a live jazz trio on Fridays.

**KING STREET TRIO ON UNIVERSITY**  
**65 UNIVERSITY AVE. E., WATERLOO**  
**884-1507**  
**WWW.KINGSTREETTRIO.COM**

Open weekdays for lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Dinner seatings are Monday and Tuesday from 5 to 9:30 p.m.; Wednesday and Thursday until 10 p.m.; Friday and Saturday until 11, and Sunday 4:30 to 9 p.m. Late diners welcome. Catering available.

## OTHER MENUS

• **Mimosa Restaurant (Cambridge)**  
**624-2023**

An enchanting cottage set back from the road in downtown Galt. Homey and elegant, with an intimate atmosphere, fine continental cuisine, friendly service and special touches like monogrammed plates and edible flowers.

• **Bistro Six (Guelph) 837-5754**

From the original owners of the Baker St. Bistro, this is an intimate, uncomplicated eatery offering a fine menu and a calm atmosphere. The cuisine is ever-changing, so it's always a fresh experience.

• **Xavier's (Fergus) 787-4688**

Casual fine dining and an enchanting natural backdrop perched above a rushing waterfall on the banks of the Grand River. The accent is on simplicity, with fresh ingredients from the Fergus market.

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