

Kiss Kansas goodbye...

...Though it's still very easy to feel at home in the artful ambience of Oz Kafé

Kyle Roerick, Ottawa Xpress January 13, 2011



Oz Kafé: Where creativity in the kitchen and dining room combine.
Photo: Ben Welland

I had heard so much about Oz Kafé, an Elgin Street institution, I thought I would finally give it a try. I had to run this one solo as Alex is off across the Atlantic for the holidays. With my sidekick in mind, I departed on my own journey into the Land of Oz hoping to enjoy some delicious wonders.

Oz Kafé is an eclectic, artsy and "come as you are" bistro in the heart of Ottawa's Elgin restaurant district. Unpretentious fare is served by friendly hosts in a cozy underground setting with original art hung from both the walls and ceiling. My personal favourites were the installation of wine glasses over the tables by the front window and the retro cutoff jean jacket with acrylic art on the back.

Unlike the Wizard of Oz, this place doesn't pretend to be something it's not and offers simple yet creative fare. The main thing I loved about the dinner menu was that I didn't need to spend most of my evening analyzing it – I could find variety in every dish. The servers weren't over-the-top or imperious and instead stuck to the vibe of the place, which I might describe as "chillaxed."

The appetizer list was extensive and full of seasonal and local ingredients, which had this foodie very happy. I have a thing for Mariposa

Farm's duck, so I immediately gravitated to the duck breast salad – thinly sliced duck on a bed of apple and assorted cabbage slaw. Sweet and tangy, the slaw paired well with the fatty and slightly salted roasted duck. It was pleasantly presented and surrounded with what looked like an arugula oil and balsamic reduction.

For the second course, I chose Oz's daily fish special: seared white albacore tuna on roasted parallelograms of butternut squash and lardons of bacon, topped with frisée and a light citrus vinegar. Fresh and filling, this dish left me quite satiated, so I passed on the chocolate dessert and enjoyed another glass of wine and the chill atmosphere instead.

Oz Kafé
361 Elgin Street, #6
(613) 234-0907

Appetizers: \$8-\$15
Dinner: \$15-\$26