

# THE BUFFALO NEWS

## Very now cuisine

### Pleasing modern palates at Zest

By JANICE OKUN  
*News Restaurant Reviewer*  
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Elizabeth A. Mundschenk/Buffalo News Liisa Sellors pours wine for Kim Jackson and Gord Henderson at Zest in Fonthill, Ont.

In the relatively tiny town of Fonthill, Ont., set amid the fields full of late-summer produce, there's a restaurant that aims for the very essence of sophistication.

Its name is Zest. Its walls are painted a remarkable deep blue, and the handsome banquettes along the wall are cleverly fitted with handsome pillows that fit in the exact right spot of your back. It offers a view of the kitchen so vast that the customer feels as if he's draining those obviously local carrots right along with the cooks. Not only are the surroundings totally of the moment, the menu is, too. The chefs, who we were told have cooked all over the world, offer a list of items adorned with the ingredients of 2004.

There's an appetizer, for example, of lacquered duck and chive crepe with cucumber, scallions, young ginger and coconut with hoisin dipping sauce (\$13). Another appetizer (unfortunately not available on our visit) was a vegetable Samosa with a curry fruit sauce (\$10).

The Spring Chicken main dish (\$24) is rubbed with lemongrass and ginger before it is grilled.

The dessert (\$9) of local berries and honeyed mascarpone cream is served with Saskatoonberry coulis. (The berry is similar to a blueberry, I guess, but oh, what an adventurous-sounding name.) There were five of us at dinner the other night. We tried quite a lot,

including my Crispy Calamari, served with the spicy Vietnamese sriracha sauce. Hearts of Romaine Salad with pancetta and Caesar vinaigrette (\$10) was attractively wrapped in a parmesan crouton.

Moving on to main dishes, Herb-Crusted Salmon Fillet (\$25) with tomato fennel fondue was laid out on braised summer greens and was nicely cooked. Honey Pistachio Duck Breast with orange cardamom sauce and a crunchy duck confit rice cake (\$26) was very fine. But the thing I loved the best was the oh-so-slightly al dente baby bok choy that accompanied it.

Ontario Pork Tenderloin with a corn potato pancake and baby spinach (\$26) was OK, too, but the pork had been cooked a tad too long.

The pasta of the evening, served up with sliced sauteed tenderloin and a wonderfully creamy mustard sauce, was probably the biggest hit.

Four desserts were available and, drunk with power (not to mention some only fair Ontario Gamay wine), we ordered the lot. And then we passed the plates enthusiastically.

Lemon Cheesecake with black currant confit and orange-Sambuca sherbet was as soothing as a cup of your mama's chicken noodle soup. Dark Double Chocolate Terrine with caramel and chocolate sauces was as rich as expected. That local berry and honeyed mascarpone cream tart with Saskatoonberry coulis was bland.

The freshly baked Double Chocolate Chip Cookies were served with coconut milk dip. Cute but gilding the lily. Coconut milk is a little too, well, intense.â€¢

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### ZEST

A few steps at the street entrance

3 1/2 stars\*

### PARKING:

### WHERE:

On the street or in lot

1469 Pelham St., Fonthill, Ont. (905-892-6474). On the menu, they call it "modern Canadian cuisine." Sleek, contemporary, imaginative, this restaurant offers some surprises. Credit cards: MasterCard, Visa.

### KID APPEAL:

Get a sitter

### FAVORITE DISH:

Pasta with Tenderloin and Mustard Sauce

### NEEDS WORK:

Ontario Pork Tenderloin

### PRICE RANGE:

Dinners from \$24 include garnishing vegetables. (All prices are Canadian.)

### SERVICE:

Very good

### NOISE LEVEL:

Moderate

### HOURS:

11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday through Friday, 5:30 to 10 p.m. Saturday.

### HEALTHY CHOICES:

Herb-Crusted Salmon Fillet; Grilled Lemongrass and Ginger-Rubbed Spring Chicken

### WHEELCHAIR ACCESS:

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