



HOTELS, RESTAURANTS

## Historic Toll House Hotel Revamps Restaurant With 'Verge'

BY NGOC NGO ON AUG 12, 2015



Verge's lamb shank plate comes with two airy pastries to prop up delicious shreds of meat. Photo by Ngoc Ngo.

The combination of pork and duck in a burger (\$17) with a bun made of mac and cheese and a fried egg on top, could not be passed up. The pork and duck patty proved that two different types of protein could work well together. The mac and cheese bun made the burger stand out and was the best part of the dish. A fried egg to top it off makes everything better. However, the side of jalapeño French fries were just regular French fries with slivers of fried jalapeno. I was expecting flavored oil, a jalapeno ketchup or something more innovative.

Verge fits well into its category as a New American hotel restaurant and lounge. The dishes were artfully presented, the service flowed seamlessly, and with a gray color scheme and gold accents, the décor was subtle and calming, befitting the Los Gatos area. All protein elements of the meal were executed well. I could have done without the chickpea cakes and the jalapeno fries could stand to be amped up, but the prices were decent for a hotel restaurant, which can often be expensive.

Verge has all the elements of a good restaurant aiming to reinvent itself as a lounge. Just a touch more care and attention to superbly execute all the cocktails and dishes is all this restaurant needs to achieve its potential as a valley destination.

A popular but hidden gem with a beautiful courtyard, the **Toll House Hotel** sits at the valley's edge, where tolls were once collected before stagecoaches headed over the mountain pass to **Santa Cruz**. After a revamp and the addition of a new chef, the hotel restaurant and lounge formerly known as Three Degrees has been **rebranded as Verge**.

Snagging a Saturday dinner reservation was simple and after entering the hotel's gated parking lot, the restaurant was easy to find. A hostess desk demarks the lounge from the hotel lobby.

We were seated promptly at one among many large tables and comfortable lounge benches in an uncrowded dining room. Dinner started with light, airy, house-made popovers, spread with sweet black currant butter. It was so delightful, we requested seconds. For drinks, we ordered a bright and fruity St. Archer White Ale (\$6.50) from San Diego and the gin pear tea (\$12), made with infused gin, St. Germaine liqueur, lemon juice and lavender simple syrup.

The menu offers a variety of soups, salads, small plates and starters, of which we ordered the braised beef cheeks and bone marrow (\$14) with celery salad and rosemary olive bread. The bone marrow on its own was plain, but the combination with tender shredded beef cheeks and soft bread was an exquisite match. The celery salad was a simple mix of celery leaves in a vinaigrette.

Nearly all the entrée items sounded appealing and our server helped recommend a few selections. I chose the lamb shank and loin (\$28) served with carrot, pearl onion, radish, green onion and chickpea cake. The lamb shank arrived with a *pâte à choux*-like pastry, separated from two pieces of medium rare lamb loin by a fresh and sweet line of mini vegetables. The lamb loin was moist but could have used a touch more seasoning. The lamb shank on its puff pastry was delicate and tender, like the beef cheeks from the appetizer course.

