

Sleek, upscale bistro opens quietly in new Canad Inn

With the design of a bistro on a side street of a Mediterranean Village, l'Bistro opened quietly July 16 in the new Canad Inn and is planning to make a bigger splash with a grand opening in September. The place has caught the fancy of people who are discovering the pizza, pasta and salads of high quality and the delightful, colorful decor.

The menu is new and different for this locality. On my first visit for lunch, I saw the Salad Nicoise on the menu and knew immediately I wanted it made with white tuna, tomatoes, green beans, black olives, hard-cooked egg and steamed baby potatoes on greens tossed in a red wine vinaigrette (\$11). The l'Bistro's version is good. You might want to split it with a friend or take half of it home.

I was having lunch with a group of seven, and we ordered a little of everything off the attractive, easy-to-read menu. Margaret Fischer (MF) ordered an individual size, two-topping pizza with a



side of garden greens. The pizza was above average, and MF was sharing the generous-sized pizza serving. We also had an order of baked penne tossed in a sauce of asiago, ricotta and Parmesan cheeses and topped with marinara sauce and mozzarella cheese. And we had an order of baked seafood penne with shrimp, scallops and crab.

You can get a half-order or a bistro-size order of the pastas, which we decided was a plus when I made my second visit with Marilyn Alexander (MA) from Winnipeg. A person with a hearty appetite might want the bistro-size serving of pasta.

My choice was Three-Cheese Ravioli at \$8 for a half-order and

\$12 for the bistro size. It arrived nicely garnished with sprigs of chive and accompanied by two crisply toasted bread sticks.

MA had a half-order of New Orleans Linguine made with Italian sausage, chicken and shrimp tossed in an Alfredo sauce. She was so pleased that she asked the waiter and learned the sausage is called capicola. She found it especially appealing because it was cooked well and chopped up. The linguine was cooked al dente, and the sauce had a nice sharp flavor.

It's hard to equate l'Bistro to franchise restaurants because it has its own sharp menu, drawn up by Nathan Sheppard, executive chef for the three restaurants operating within the Canad Inn.

And l'Bistro is a separate entity, with Brett Reay as chef and Nicole Brutger as manager. She grew up helping out with her family's restaurant in West Yellowstone. Before joining Canad Inn, she was manager of the Fargo Cork and Cleaver.

The waiters in l'Bistro wear white shirts with brilliant blue ties and black aprons over their black trousers. The service is somewhat tentative. However, the staff is friendly and helpful.

l'Bistro is located at the northern end of the Canad Inn beyond Splashers of the South Seas water park and the arcade.

l'Bistro is colorful, spacious and comfortable. The design is sleek with a center area surrounded by a low wall of rock and seating in booths and tables around the periphery. It is bright and lively with a series of splashy colorful murals done by Louis Bako, a Winnipeg artist.

There are few minuses. They ask too often if everything is OK, and service is slow.

There are many pluses. The temperature is just right. You don't shiver from too much air conditioning. The tableware of nice heavy quality is a complete set — knife, two forks, two spoons — all wrapped in a heavy white cloth napkin. Candles flicker in

▼

l'Bistro Mediterranean Eatery
Canad Inn

Executive chef: Nathan Sheppard.
Sous chef: Brett Reay.
Manager: Nicole Brutger.
Hours: Opens daily at 11 a.m.; closes 2 a.m. Monday through Saturday, midnight, Sunday.
Seating capacity: 200, with patio space for 60.
Pay: Major credit cards accepted.
Reservations: (701) 775-8404.
Report card: An upscale bistro where you can find pizza, pasta and salads of superior quality at competitive prices. Service is friendly but tentative. Colorful, inviting Mediterranean ambiance.

multicolored holders.

The restaurant has a full wine, beer and liquor menu along with soft drinks, waters, juices and Italian Cream Soda. Starters include Mediterranean mussels and spanakopita — cheese and spinach wrapped in filo pastry.

And on the last page, there are finishing touches. One is

Chocolate Colcano Cake (\$4.25). Coffee with a kick also is featured. My friend from Winnipeg ordered coffee with creme de cacao, Irish cream and amaretto almond liqueur. It's called a French Kiss, and she insists that is the way to end a meal.

Reach Hagerty at mhagerty@gra.midco.net or (701) 772-1055.