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Vancouver Eats: The Elegantly Delicious Hawksworth

R. Daniel Foster · Tuesday, August 27th, 2024

I saved the best for last during a recent Vancouver restaurant tour: Hawksworth. That was a guess, of course, but my choice turned out to be spot on.

Accolades for Hawksworth's northwest cuisine have been pouring in for some years. Opened in 2011 and named for its purveyor and Executive Chef David Hawksworth, the restaurant is located at the venerable Georgia Hotel, a Rosewood 5-star establishment built in 1927. Hints of the Roaring Twenties are found throughout the lobby's warm woods and vintage details.

After spending a decade-plus in Europe, Chef Hawksworth made his mark serving cuisine at world-famous Michelin restaurants: The Square, Le Manoir Quat' Saisons, and L'Escargot. Hawksworth's team includes Executive Chef Sylvain Assie and Pastry Chef Marissa Gonzalez. Check out his recipes, assembled in his cookbook.

The interior of Hawksworth restaurant / Photo: R. Daniel Foster

Chef Hawksworth works in culinary partnership with Air Canada. He's created Canadian-influenced seasonal dishes served in the airline's international business class and lounges. His work shows. In 2019, Air Canada was recognized by Skytrax for offering the "World's Best Business Class Lounge Dining."

Ingredients at the Georgia Hotel establishment are sourced locally and worldwide. The Hawksworth website describes the fare as having "bold, bright flavours," but I would include the word "subtle." While some tastes do wake up the taste buds, a flavorful team effort is happening here. Everything works in consort.

The meal begins

Our waiter Bertrand appeared, looking as crisp as the march of white tablecloths in the 90-seat space. We had a wide view of the Vancouver Art Gallery across the street. The stately 1911 building is the city's former provincial courthouse, repurposed in the early 1980s. Its neoclassical design in the Beaux-Art tradition was a lovely companion for the meal.

The vegetarian seasonal tasting menu served in late July had meat and other protein options. I chose scallops, which were done to perfection: crispy on the outside with an interior buttery texture.

The scallops were perfect. Crispy on the outside and buttery soft on the inside / Photo: R. Daniel Foster

The first course: pomme soufflé with smoked eggplant, lemon, and sweet cicely with its anise

undertones. The chilled puree lent a nice burst of flavor. A great start.

The second course built on that success: broccoli tartare with toasted raisin, oyster mushroom, almonds, little squares of cheddar, and crostini. Served in a bowl, the ample dish was light, the medley of textures working together, the bold cheddar making it all the more interesting.

The dish was so good, that my dining partner tried to replicate it when he returned home. I did as well. He largely succeeded. I failed.

Summer squash and chanterelle were next, served with zucchini, sourdough cavatelli, and borage flower. The texture of the cavatelli (made on site) was the right side of chewy, the vegetables providing needed crunch.

Earthy flavors are up next

The sorrel granita palate cleanser was like a gourmet snow cone. The icy taste did its job well.

The fourth course with its watermelon radish tatki base, was all about earthy flavors. It included snap peas, turnips, purple shiso, and furikake. The Japanese shiso blended basil, mint, and anise tastes, lending the dish a bright freshness.

The sorrel granita palate cleanser was like a gourmet snow cone / Photo: R. Daniel Foster

The fifth course: poached cherry, einkorn honey, and almond cake. The dish was doused with *cajeta*, a confection of thickened caramel made of sweetened goat's milk. Basically, a form of *dulce de leche*. All delicious.

The fifth course: poached cherry, einkorn honey, and almond cake / Photo: R. Daniel Foster

The topper: bonbons, and strawberry hibiscus pate de fruit. It wasn't my favorite. I could have ended on the fifth course, a standout among many highlights on the menu.

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The Hawksworth Restaurant Group also operates Bel Café, and Nightingale, which was named "Canada's Best Farm-to-Table Restaurant."

Hawksworth is available for events, including private dining and weddings.

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