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FOOD

BY TODD SOUTH



Desserts at Zeppelin include tiny kumquat lemon bars.
PHOTO/ALLISON YOUNG

Ship shape

Zeppelin is a 21-and-over space combining steam-punk with nouveau-classic speakeasy swank.

The menu includes small snacks, dips, a shellfish raw bar, charcuterie and cheese boards, flatbreads, salads, small plates, entrees and simple-to-fancy desserts. Gluten free and vegan options are clearly marked, and you can enjoy those bites from a combination of bar, pub and lounge-style seating areas. The service team is equipped with tablets, and everyone knew what we ordered, what was on the way, and we waited nor wanted for anything.

My group of four started with a shared plate of King Trumpet mushroom skewers (\$11), doused in a teriyaki sauce of black garlic and shiso and sprinkled with sesame seeds. There was a sneaky bit of heat in the background, though the meaty texture and flavor of the fungi came through. The only downside was the fairly small serving size, perhaps a single large 'shroom rendered into four inconsistent slices.

Guinness steamed mussels (\$14) were pretty great. Served in a big, stainless pot and topped with sprigs of fresh herbs. It had whole cloves of garlic swimming in the broth—encircled by toasted bread rounds. The meats ranged from small to pretty big, and a few had fallen from their shells to be fished out of the delicious goo. Pro tip: smear a garlic clove on bread, and top it with mussel after a dip in the goo.

A crock of caramelized Brussels sprouts with sour apple (\$8) plus peppered pork belly (\$4) was just outstanding—al dente with nicely crisped bits, in a salty/sweet marriage with porcine heaven. The dish was topped with chives and slivers of daikon radish, and the presentation was elegant and hearty.

Seafood dip (\$14) of lobster, crab and artichoke—served with rounds of artisan bread—is available cold or hot. We went hot. The dish was served in a cast

iron vessel, which kept it warm right through the end. With a touch of tarragon, it was cheesy, creamy, super rich and not something you want every day—unless you're purposely trying to kill your heart.

Wagyu sliders (\$14) with chipotle aioli, smoked onion, fresh dill relish and pepper jam were a mixed bag. Though disappointingly cooked medium-well, the high fat content of the meat allowed it to remain fairly juicy. The flavor combo really differed between each slider, some being particularly sweet, others noticeably spicy. There was just too much going on to pull off a concerted result. Lastly, the little buns ranged from being soft and enjoyable, to hard and stale. This was easily the least effective item ordered.

The lone entree ordered was a soup plate with three seared scallops (\$21) in a celery root puree, topped with herb seafoam and pickled "sea beans," a.k.a. pickleweed. Everything about this was excellent. The large molluscs were tender and browned—the puree and seafoam adding a dramatic amount of rich flavor. The vaguely asparagus-like texture and flavor of the greens was a nice accent.

Desserts of grapefruit granita and kumquat lemon bars (\$3 each) finished things off. I didn't much care for the icy, tart granita, but the combination of lemon and kumquat was enjoyable, with a fun microgreen presentation that looked like something from Dr. Seuss. Toss in a few beers and cocktails, and we had a pretty nice time. □

Zeppelin

1445 S. Meadows Pkwy., 387-4937

Zeppelin is open Monday and Tuesday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. and Wednesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Reservations are not accepted. Learn more at zeppelinreno.com.