



Chop, Chop!
Yella Grille's Lamb Chops.

REVIEW

Yella Good

In Andover, Yella Grille's Mediterranean cuisine is a spot-on representation of the real thing.

By Anna and David Kasabian

WHAT A WONDERFUL SURPRISE to find this cozy little European-style bistro tucked away on a tiny side street in Andover, steps from the town's posh and lively shopping district. Co-owners Carlo and Danielle Berdahn have merged their energies, talents, and passion for authentic Mediterranean food and created a haven of casual comfort and fabulous flavors from the chef's always-fresh handcrafted creations. In fact, when in town earlier this year, a producer from NBC's *Today* show stopped for dinner at Yella and was so enamored of Carlo Berdahn's cooking that he subsequently invited the chef to appear in a segment on the show.

In our visit, we started with the Mediterranean Mezza Platter, a plated version of the traditional Middle Eastern appetizer table filled with an array of exotic flavors, aromas, and textures. There are tiny meat pies—handmade, one by one, fresh every day—stuffed grape leaves, spring rolls, spinach pie, falafel, smoked eggplant baba-ganouj, and crispy house-made pita chips. All herbs and seasonings—seven in the falafel alone—are brought directly from Lebanon by Carlo and Danielle.

Next, the fattouch salad, another regional classic, arrives piled high with super-fresh romaine lettuce, tomato, cucumber, onion, parsley, mint, radishes, and sumac, all complemented by a dressing of olive oil, garlic, more sumac, and fragrant fresh mint.

The lamb chop entrée is divine, made with grilled Australian lamb for lighter,

Best Dishes: Clockwise from top left, Sweet Crepe; Mezza Platter; and the Fattouch Salad.



sweeter, smaller chops. They are seasoned with extra-virgin olive oil and lemon juice and served with an über-umami demi-glace that is simmered for five hours. On the side, a tender and delicate mushroom risotto is redolent of chicken broth, mushroom stock, butter, white wine, and shallots.

Carlo prepares the remarkable beef short ribs by searing the beef and combining it with carrots, garlic, onion, red wine, herbs, orange juice, and tangerine, then slow braising it all together for six hours. This is served with Lebanese couscous (larger than the French variety), cooked

in a rich beef and chicken stock with caraway, cumin, cinnamon, and caramelized shallots.

For dessert, the hearty chocolate bread pudding with toasted house-made brioche and both milk and white chocolate is topped with banana and a dollop of vanilla gelato. The ultra-thin sweet crepe, on the other hand, is stuffed with slices of caramelized banana and a dreamy hazelnut-chocolate cream. Both are fresh and fabulous.

We highly recommend Yella—Arabic for “Come on, let’s go”—for the great

food, prompt and cheery service, and the distinct feeling that this is what it must feel like to be home in Lebanon.

The Menu

Chef: Carlo Berdahn. **Appetizers:** Mediterranean Mezza Platter (\$14), Fattouch Salad (\$8.50). **Entrées:** Lamb Chops (\$29.75), Beef Short Ribs (\$26). **Dessert:** Chocolate Bread Pudding with Banana Flombage (\$8.50), Sweet Crepe with Bananas (\$7.50). **Location:** 16 Post Office Avenue, Andover, 978-749-0011, yellagrille.com.