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# EAT BEAT

REVIEW

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| Food     |  |
| Ambience |  |
| Service  |  |
| Value    |  |

## dining

### A chip off the old Block

Bocado Tapas Wine Bar

86 Winter St.

508-797-1011

[www.bocadotapasbar.com](http://www.bocadotapasbar.com)

By Matt Quinn

**W**hile tapas isn't new, its appearance in Worcester as a dedicated option is. And who better to bring this trendy (or "sexy" as the Web site claims) form of appetizer dining to us than Bocado, by the owners of Block Five. Once you pass through the curtain, you've left Worcester and entered a dark and sultry space where eyes rise to meet you. It's still brick-and-beam but in no way evocative of American industrialism.

My wife and I were led to a small table at the end of a cream, wall-length, micro-fiber couch. Within moments, our server, Alicia, offered a quick tutorial on tapas, a Spanish culinary style that stems from inns

that used plates (tops) to keep bugs, etc. out of one's drink. In time, they began adding snacks to the plates. At least this is the story I received from a world weary co-traveler who introduced me to tapas in San Francisco years ago.

My wife is a snacker and, so, loves tapas. She much prefers its numerous tiny meals to a large entrée. And while sometimes tapas is little more than a euphemism for appetizers, Bocado's offers dozens of unique and interesting options.

While strategizing, we enjoyed a crisp and cold Dos Equis Amber (\$4) and Bocado's "Wine Flight No. 5," a three-glass sampler of tempranillo (Spanish red) wines (\$7.50).

We began with Queso de Cabra Con Miel (fried goat cheese with honey and almonds) and Pato de Fumar (smoked duck breast with balsamic syrup) (\$5.99 each, two for \$10). This gorgeous plating, on a small cutting board, placed the golden fried ball of creamy, deeply tasty cheese with roasted red pepper, sliced almonds and a drizzle of honey alongside thinly sliced duck breast and baguette.

We followed with Ensalada de Madelena (\$5), a salad of chopped lettuce, red onion, hearts of palm, tomato, avocado, and manchega cheese. We loved this salad, a refreshing combination of novel and classic elements.

From there, we proceeded to Kobe beef burgers (\$10), a pair of mini masterpieces that elevated the

denigrated hamburger to five-star status, with its gorgeous medium-rare beef, Dijon mayonnaise, basil, lettuce, tomato and Spanish onion.

We finished dinner with Conejo con Tomate y acetituna (\$7), braised rabbit in tomato and roasted garlic sauce with rustic toast, a crock of fall-off-the-bone rabbit in a stew-like sauce. The dish could have passed for barbecue chicken wings and legs with robust meat.

And last, we sampled one of the homemade desserts — traditional flan (\$7) — an incredibly creamy preparation with a caramel glaze topping and freshly sliced strawberries, blueberries, and blackberries. This we enjoyed with a refreshingly chilled rose we stumbled upon (2005 Paris Balta Rosa de Pacs, \$6), an ideal summer drink.

The bright blue sky had faded to night, changing the character of the room again, when we called for our check: \$69.83 before tip (or about \$47 without drinks), a great deal for the culinary odyssey we experienced. Each item had been meticulously conceived and prepared, and served by the courteous, professional Alicia and a dedicated helper, Andon. Don't miss out on one of Worcester's best dinner opportunities. □

*Matt Quinn is a pseudonym. Comments? E-mail editorial@worcestermag.com.*