



Kennebunk Inn's surprising new "Academe."

Head of the Class

Inspired by Cat Cora's praise for **Academe Brasserie and Tavern's** Lobster Pot Pie on Food Network's *The Best Thing I Ever Ate*, we slip into the newly renovated Kennebunk Inn for a taste. And we're glad we did, as the menu here sparkles with innovation.

Straightaway we are bewitched by mixologist Adrian Trudeau's award-winning "Sage Against the Machine," a magical mix of Absolut Raspberri vodka, triple sec, St. Germain, sour mix, muddled sage, and lime (\$12). Also dead-on is a competitively priced wine list from which we savored Seghesio Sonoma Zinfandel 2007, an absolute bargain at \$28.

Because chef/owners **Brian and Shanna O'Hea's** are Culinary Institute of America graduates, there's a scholarly trope to Academe.

Menu categories reflect studious sojourns, and for a "Foundation Course," nothing beats Brian's braised pork belly, served in a diminutive cast-iron skillet and glazed in a pomegranate-lime compote on top of handmade hubbard squash ravioli (\$12).

From "Hot and Cold Topics," we respond to the familiar chord the iceberg lettuce strikes against the clang of very good blue cheese and smoked applewood bacon (\$8).

My partner is nearly seduced into majoring in the "Minors," specifically the Citrus Crab Ravioli (\$21). The homemade pasta dough is subtly infused with flavors from orange, lemon, and lime, nicely complementing the fresh Maine crab and mascarpone stuffing. Topping these beauties are four large shrimp and pan-seared, sautéed mussels in a Cointreau Alfredo sauce with just a hint of curry.

But we've promised you lobster.

Academe's scrumptious take on Lobster Pot

Pie (\$18) exceeds our super-hyped expectations. Splendidly served in a colorful Le Creuset pot, the delectable meat from a freshly caught Maine lobster peeks out from below handmade French puff pastry and basks in a velvety cream sauce sporting just enough fresh peas and corn to heighten its flavors.

For "Graduate Studies," we venture into the chef's special of the evening, Brian's Sauerbraten (\$28). A winter holiday toast to his Polish ancestral celebrations, the dish includes grilled kielbasa, sauerkraut, sautéed apples, a dijon and whole-grain mustard blend, sour cream, and best of all, horseradish, and potato perogies. Hearty fare, and a welcome change.

Our "Personal Enrichment" course marries apple pie with gingersnap crust with house-made maple rum raisin ice cream, a delight created by Shanna as an extra credit. Other desserts include

ACADEME BRASSERIE AND TAVERN

45 Main St., Kennebunk. Tues-Sat, 11:30-9 p.m.
985-3351 thekennebunkinn.com

Signature S'mores, Reverse Root Beer Floats, and Peanut Butter Chocolate Volcanos. Don't enroll at Academe because your friends are going there. Go there because it's your school and your future. ■

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