

Flatiron Restaurant

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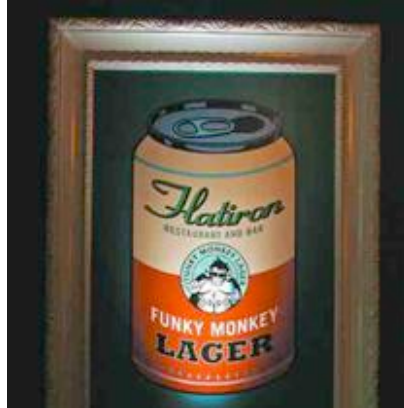
Michael Noble, one of the planet's really fine chefs and one whom I will follow anywhere, helped put together Flatiron Restaurant and Bar. (As executive chef, he also helped put together Catch and has lent his expertise to other places of good eats.)

Flatiron is located at the intersection of Barlow Trail and 27th Avenue in the inauspicious dining neighbourhood of Calgary's northeast. It's worth seeking out, if only for a chance to have a drink at the orange-lit bar with its backdrop of orange-lit bottles that looks like a keyboard, if you imagine yourself upside-down. The Man can imagine himself that way better than most.

Sleek, espresso-coloured wood, leather banquettes and cowhide chairs make for a funky sexiness in the lounge. The dining room has more of a family orientation. On the Sunday we were there, a large family with small children was enjoying dinner and many of the other diners had a distinct family vibe.

There's a bit of a fun-with-food philosophy here. Our advice to you is this: because life is short, eat dessert first. Order Flatiron's not-your-usual-cheesecake and the caramelized apple bread pud, then, for "dessert," share the restaurant's signature flat-iron steak. That wasn't quite what we did, but we could have.

Instead, we started light, with lettuce leaves stuffed with pea shoots, carrots, red peppers and rice noodles, dipped in a spicy peanut sauce (\$9.95). These were very nice. (You can add chicken or pork to your wraps for \$3.95.) Other fun appetizers include prawn cigarillos and mini fish and chips.



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The Man thought, given the restaurant's name, that the flat-iron steak (\$22.95) was the way to go. The flat-iron is a marbled, flavourful cut; Flatiron did it justice, grilling it medium rare and slicing and fanning it for serving. It was seductively succulent, and we dipped some of the steak into a side of grainy-mustard-and-brown-butter sauce. Mr. Steak came with perfect green beans, roasted beets and spaghetti squash, and creamy mashed done with chives. This was an excellent feed, indeed.



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A bowl of Thai rice noodles and veg (\$13.25) was less successful. There was not enough of the red curry-coconut sauce or vegetables to stand up to an abundance of noodles. This is easily rectified; I added six plump, perfect prawns for an additional \$4.95. The dish has a good flavour, though, just spicy enough.

Now to the not-your-usual lemon cheesecake. This is certainly a fun bit of creativity, more in the style of a s'more than a cheesecake. A bottom crust of shortbread and a top crust of toasted marshmallow encase mascarpone cheesecake, which is liberally slathered with lemon curd (\$8.25). It's cheesecake with attitude.

Flatiron specializes in fancy-ass cocktails and the house beers are Angry Bald Man and Funky Monkey. A short selection of wines is available, too. For upscale, casual food, Flatiron does a good, fun job. But don't forget: eat dessert first.

Flatiron Restaurant and Bar, 2493 27th Ave. N.E., 403-266-4780, experienceflatiron.com.

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What's in a Name?

The flat-iron steak is cut from the blade-chuck roast, and is also known as a top-blade steak. It derives its more appetizing name from the fact that it resembles the shape of an old-fashioned flat-iron.

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