



Pork tenderloin roulade, with dried cranberry pine nut stuffing, maple sweet potato hash, and an apple butter sauce from the Beverly Hills Grill in Beverly Hills.

EMAIL PRINT

Tried and trendy

★★★★

When the Beverly Hills Grill opened in 1988, owner Bill Roberts playfully capitalized on the Oakland County town and its similarity (in name anyway) to one in California. The restaurant's logo (watch carefully for the small pink sign between 13 Mile and 14 Mile) features palm trees; inside, a light fixture is shaped like the sun. Fifteen years ago California cuisine was the new, new thing, emphasizing fresh, seasonal ingredients and lighter sauces. The Beverly Hills Grill proves that it's a formula that still works.

Roberts credits his staff with the restaurant's longevity and popularity, especially Chef Patrick Roettele, who started as a line cook soon after the restaurant opened. "In his spare time, he reads cookbooks," Roberts laughs. "He loves pairing food with different flavors."

The Beverly Hills Grill is one of those places where the scene is just as important as the food. While the building from the outside is, to be polite, modest, on the inside it's a happening place. The handsome room has a happy buzz, but it's not too noisy to carry on a conversation.

When we came for Sunday brunch, there was a 30-minute wait, and on a Friday evening (early, around 6:30) we waited 45 minutes. But no matter. Get a drink from the bar and enjoy people watching and eavesdropping. (Judging from the crowd, it's OK to wear your full-length fur this season.)

I struck up a conversation with a woman who was sitting next to me, and asked, "What's the best thing on the menu?" She said that she had been coming two or three times a year and had never been disappointed. I mentioned how much we had enjoyed brunch the previous weekend. "I didn't realize they served brunch," she said. (The restaurant serves three meals a day, seven days a week.) I described the omelet that the co-diner ordered: thick and fluffy, big chunks of lobster, big chunks of avocado, smoked bacon, tomatoes, onion and blue cheese. Somehow all these ingredients were contained by the eggs and folded neatly. The co-diner remarked that it was the first time he'd seen lobster at the breakfast table. Even in Maine, it can't be too common.

I ordered off the chalkboard that morning, and had the most wonderful French toast made with egg bread, drizzled with caramel sauce and dotted with walnuts, cranberries and slices of apple; a little pot of crème fraîche is served on the side.

By the time I finished describing breakfast, our table was ready. As we gathered our coats, I said, "\$25 for both of us."

Dinner was just as good. The chalkboard was crammed with specials, mostly seafood, with an emphasis on interesting sides and seasonings. Again, the prices were more than reasonable.

We began with an appetizer of fried calamari (\$7). It was very lightly dusted with flour and flash fried, then served with a vibrant cocktail sauce.

The co-diner ordered Asian-spiced duck breast (\$18). When it came to the table, he noticed that, for all the interesting things on the plate — a miniature head of bok choy, a row of shiitake mushrooms, a beautiful cross-cut slice of Napa cabbage, steamed snow peas — there was no starch. Perhaps that's what our server meant when she described it as "light." The duck breast was skinless and boneless (that unfortunate chicken thing is continuing on other fowl), and the hoisin sauce, thinned with citrus and spiced with ginger, was excellent.

Grilled shrimp with fusille (\$17) featured a fresh tomato sauce with lots of basil. Each piece of fusille turned in three directions, and the chèvre cheese is sublime with pasta. Bright green peas and bits of prosciutto complete the dish.

A specialty of the house is veal meat loaf which is served with a sauce made from porcini mushrooms (\$14). For lunch there are sandwiches such as jumbo lump crab melt with Swiss cheese and tomatoes on sourdough bread (\$11).

Desserts are classics, and not over the top. Fresh fruit cobbler is a favorite; ours was made with sweet apples with a crumb crust. Served in a banana-split boat, it was plenty for two.

There is a good wine list and a full bar. Several bottles of wine are available for less than \$30.

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Beverly Hills Grill

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Price: \$10 to \$25

Wheelchair accessible.

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by **Elissa Karg**
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