

Wine & Dine

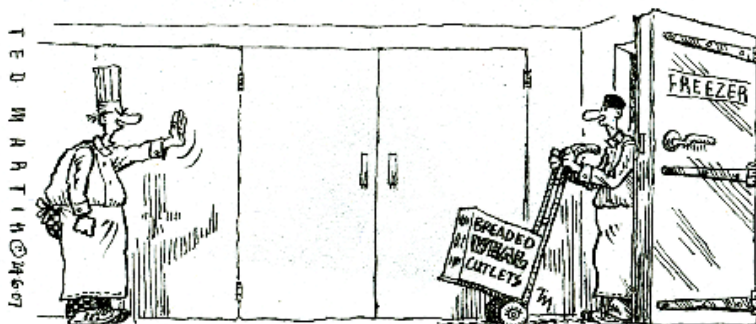
Reds strong link in chain

*For my first visit to the dining room at Reds Bistro and Wine Bar, I decided to go with three other experienced diners so that they could provide some reasonable balance to my neuro-pathological disdain for chain restaurants.

Reds, to be fair, isn't really a chain (there's only one location) but it's owned by Sircorp, the folks behind such no-doubt-about-it chain restaurants like Jack Astor's and Canyon Creek Chophouse. Check out the Sircorp web site and you're treated to corporate speak like "demographic appeal," "concept restaurants" and "diverse portfolio." Inspiring. It is not.

But with a relatively new chef at the helm (Michael Steh) whose resume includes other wonderful restaurants like Splendid and Canoe, I was willing to put prejudice aside and give Reds a shot.

Thankfully, my misgivings about Reds were soon banished as we were treated to one of the best meals in recent memory. Located in First Canadian Place, in the heart of the financial district, Reds



"No! No! You have to think outside the box!"

DINING OUT

Wine & More Wines

is made up of two distinct spaces — the ever popular wine bar at street level, and the fine dining bistro on the second floor. Oenophiles will be thrilled

with the wine list — a good 10 pages long, it features some 400 wines, with 60-plus by the glass. And those who are intimidated or merely confused by such a weighty tome can take refuge in the helpful pairing suggestions on the menu. Things get off to a great start with an amuse that consists of a light and thoroughly

delicious deep-fried oyster. Appetizers include the waiter-recommended green curry crab cakes (\$17) and a foie gras terrine (\$18) that simply melted in one's mouth. Every main was a winner — from the perfectly prepared sea bream fillet (\$28) to the venison tenderloin (\$38) served with purple potatoes. I had the pork served two

ways, which included a tender chop as well as a piece of crisp fried pork-belly that I was thoroughly unwilling to share. Chef Steh has much to be proud of here. The dessert list sounded good, but we skipped over it altogether and concentrated on Red's well-selected cheese list (one selection for \$6, three for \$17 and five for

\$25.) Who can resist a soft Quebec bleu, or a nine-year-old Ottawa Valley cheddar?

While generically attractive, the interior design at Reds is the only thing we found to complain about. "It's like an upscale Kelsey's," opined one of my companions. "There's something soulless about it, isn't there?" offered another.

Service is just fine, and there's free parking for diners at First Canadian Place after 5:30. A meal for two, with a reasonably-priced wine, will push you close to the \$200 mark.

sundringoubrogers.com

★★★½

Reds

77 Adelaide St. W. (near Bay)
416-862-7337

Hours: Lunch 11:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Mon-Fri; Dinner 4 p.m. - 11 p.m.
Mon-Fri; 5 p.m. - 11 p.m. Sat.

Closed Sundays
Chef: Michael Steh
Dress: Business upscale
Specialty of the house:
Wine-inspired cuisine
Mains: \$29 - \$39
Licensed