

## Pavilion Wine Bar

If you think North Woods cuisine is limited to fish fries and tap beer, you're in for a surprise at this Hayward wine bar



Right: The Danger Stage gives new reasons for stage fright. Below: Pavilion co-owner Molly Otis is known to break out her red fiddle.



At Pavilion Wine Bar, *L'etape de Danger* (the Danger Stage) juts precariously from the wall across from the dining balcony. The stage is a mere four feet deep, and there's a long-distance drop to the first floor. Even if you're not one of the daring musicians to take to the stage, a night at Pavilion—with its ever-evolving menu and live music—is an adventure.

The wine bar shares space with both a gift shop and a basement wine cave in downtown Hayward. The businesses opened in 2006 and are a joint effort of Molly Otis (formerly of “Molly and the Heymakers”) and Suzee McDonald. In the kitchen is chef Caitlin Nazer, who trained in the Twin Cities at Le Cordon Bleu.

The wine bar's menu gets its inspiration from tapas restaurants, where you make a meal out of hot and cold gourmet dishes, all served on small plates. It's always a treat; continuous snacking is, after all, one of my favorite pastimes.

Munching on complimentary niçoise olives and crispy breadsticks, I mull over my options. In the past, I've tried seafood cakes (similar to crab cakes) and osso buco. Last winter, I celebrated Chinese New Year at Pavilion with fresh chicken salad presented on a bed of rice noodles, and feathery ginger cake, served with a lovely green-tea-and-orange-blossom-honey sauce. Tonight, I choose the bread dippers plate, shrimp scampi, and a glass of pinot noir, to start.

The mini traditional and whole-grain baguettes arrive with three spreads: chèvre, zesty olive tapenade, and basil pesto. Next come the three largest grilled shrimp imaginable, perched atop a creamy garlic-butter sauce, with a twice-baked potato on the side. The shrimp are the highlight of the meal.

But the highlight of the evening is the band, which emerges from a small doorway behind the Danger Stage. The seemingly fearless musicians proceed to play everything from Burt Bacharach to U2. According to McDonald, most of the regular musicians are from the Hayward area. They're all good, but it's Otis's voice you need to hear: deep, honed, and tuneful. Plus, she plays a bright red fiddle, transforming the ordinary into the sublime.

The beauty of tapas is that you can keep ordering more if you're still hungry, and I realize I am. For round two, I try another glass of wine, and beef carpaccio served with olive oil, capers, and Parmesan.

The evening progresses nicely—music swells, wine flows. A few folks step outdoors to smoke cigars on the patio, where you can dine in nice weather (the restaurant itself is smoke-free). When the band gets thirsty, they lower a bucket on a rope down to the bar—one benefit of playing a risky gig. I marvel, as I do with each visit, at this choreography of good food, wine, and music, right here in the North Woods.

• Pavilion Wine Bar, 10551 Main St., Hayward; (715) 634-6035, pavilionwinecave.com.

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## RECIPE Pavilion Scampi

Try co-owner Molly Otis's tangy take on shrimp scampi.

### FOR THE SHRIMP:

- 2 lbs. large shrimp (shell-on)
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 teaspoons sea salt
- 1 teaspoon lemon pepper
- 1 tablespoon honey

Butterfly shrimp (see note). Place in a pan and cover with olive oil, sea salt, lemon pepper, and honey. Set aside.

### FOR THE SAUCE:

- 2 bottles dry white wine
- 1 cured lemon
- ½ cup roasted garlic
- ½ cup honey
- 1 teaspoon sea salt
- 1 tablespoon white pepper
- 2 cups unsalted butter

Pour wine in a heavy pot and boil until it concentrates to about 1-2 cups. Set aside. Cut unpeeled lemon into quarters, remove seeds, and purée in blender until it becomes a paste. (If you need to thin the paste, use more white wine concentrate). Put paste into a saucepan. Mix in roasted garlic, honey, sea salt, and white pepper. Melt butter separately and mix it into the paste. Simmer over low heat until hot. Meanwhile, grill shrimp (3 minutes each side). Pour sauce on a warmed plate and arrange shrimp. Top with cilantro or parsley. Serves 4.

NOTE: To butterfly shrimp, clean the shrimp and pull the shell off. Slice the shrimp down the middle so it's still connected on the back, giving it the appearance of a butterfly. ❏