Rossetti Restaurant, a chic new Italian restaurant that opened in downtown Lynn last November, trades on the popularity of its cozy sister restaurant, Cafe Rossetti’s, on the Winthrop waterfront.

But there are important differences between the two places, one of which is the drinks. The 38-seat Winthrop cafe is BYOB. The Lynn restaurant, twice as big, has a full-service craft

Pan-roasted haddock lies on a bed of pea and shrimp risotto and stewed tomato.
bar whose bartenders cut their own ice with a chainsaw. We’re not sure how this improves a cocktail, but we love the idea of food purveyors showing this kind of commitment.

Family-owned and family-run, Rossetti Restaurant occupies an ornate one-story brick building a stone’s throw from a pioneer of casually upscale dining in Lynn, the Blue Ox Restaurant and Bar.

“Lynn is having a resurgence,” said Bob Rossetti, co-executive chef and co-owner of the new restaurant. “I’m someone who believes, ‘If you build it, they will come.’ ” Diners can park for free in a large lot directly across from the restaurant’s entrance.

Rossetti Restaurant
47 Sutton St., Lynn 781-599-2051.
http://rossettirestaurant.com

Hours: Kitchen open Tuesday through Thursday, 4 to 9 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 4 to 10 p.m.; Sunday, 4 to 9 p.m.

Credit cards: Major credit cards accepted

Handicap accessibility: Accessible to the handicapped
Our party of four visited on a cold, quiet Thursday evening. Low illumination, Ella Fitzgerald at soft volume, and partitions here and there gave the modern, high-ceilinged interior an intimate feel. The menu, presented between heavy, cloth-bound covers, was varied but didn’t overwhelm us with page after page of choices.

A $10 appetizer of fried eggplant topped with ricotta and a marinara sauce came with fresh basil and baby spinach. It was pleasingly presented as well as tasty. A $10 winter salad was a well-conceived blend of root vegetables, notably juicy red and yellow beets, plus a few fresh blueberries and bright red strawberries. The berries tasted fresh enough to have come from a local greenhouse.

A dish of pan-roasted veal Marsala ($19) was a treat, with chewy shiitake mushrooms, diced ham, onions, and a rich, garlicky, slightly sweet wine sauce. The penne noodles with it tasted homemade and were nicely al dente. Also pleasing was an $18 pasta entree: sweet anise-flavored Italian sausage with broccoli rabe and white beans on fresh cavatelli. It was a medley of intense flavors.

We passed on one of the restaurant’s bestsellers, the $29 pan-roasted sirloin “Mafiosa,” which is made with beef aged for six weeks. Instead, we picked something equally meaty: an enormous (16-ounce) grilled pork chop, one of the night’s specials at $25. The chop came with white Tuscan beans and broccoli rabe in a white-wine sauce with fresh garlic and Romano cheese, and was accompanied by a side dish of linguine.

A pork chop that big can be an ordeal to chew if the meat is dry, but this one was admirably tender. The trick, Rossetti said later, is to brine the pork first, which is done for 24 hours in a solution of sugar, salt, and spices.

Another special, the pan-roasted Atlantic haddock with a sweet-pea-and-shrimp risotto and stewed tomato in sherry butter ($24), was fresh-tasting and abundant. Like everything else, it arrived steaming hot. Indeed, the service was attentive and pleasant, though the young man refilling our water glasses was possibly a tad overattentive — his continual visits had a way of disrupting conversation.

The portions here were ample all around, so the four of us decided to split a pair of desserts ($7 each): espresso-infused tiramisu with a mascarpone filling and cocoa powder, and a flourless chocolate torta (made on the premises) drizzled with homemade raspberry sauce. Both were delicious, putting a fitting end to a highly satisfying meal.
Rossetti said that he and his brother Steve, who is co-executive chef, make a point of chatting with diners most evenings. He estimated that close to half the restaurant’s patrons are Lynn residents. Still, the family has always intended this to be more than a drop-in eatery for locals.

“We wanted a Boston-style restaurant,” Bob said. He’s familiar with the concept: His son Chris, the new restaurant’s general manager, worked for three years at Mistral in the Back Bay.

Personally, we’re not holding our breath waiting for Lynn to challenge Gloucester, Salem, or Beverly as a regional dining destination. Still, Rossetti Restaurant, along with the Blue Ox, could be the core of an interesting new restaurant scene. Judging from our visit, we’d say that Lynn is already worth crossing a city line or two for a night out.

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