

## The Alfiere at the Westin Hotel

### Italian cuisine perfect for dinner date in uptown

By Jeri Young  
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Barry Hogan's mother told him there were three things he had to know.

How to cook.  
How to clean.  
And how to sew.

"I could bake a cake almost as good as hers at 13," Hogan said. "I guess I'm a pretty good learner."

Hogan, 41 and a 12-year food service veteran, has been tapped to manage The Alfiere, one of Charlotte's newest fine dining experiences.

Located in the plaza of the Westin Hotel, The Alfiere is a treat for the senses.

Featuring a diverse menu of Mediterranean and Italian cuisine, I found The Alfiere to be on par with many of Charlotte's finest eateries. Entrees are reasonably-priced and service is excellent.

Diners can expect to pay about \$50 for dinner for two, without wine.

"Anytime you eat in a fine restaurant, you can expect to pay more," Hogan said. "You pay for excellent service."

And service you get.

The restaurant features an open kitchen and chef Robert Magee often came out to check on diners.

My waitress, Jackie, was attentive, friendly and at the same time non-obtrusive.

She knew the menu as well as the ingredients, which was a definite must for any new eatery.

"We put our people through a month-long training course," Hogan said. "We taught them what was in each dish and how it was prepared."

The restaurant features a rotisserie and grill where chicken and duck are prepared throughout the day.

For an appetizer, I had the antipasti platter, a cold platter served with a roasted garlic vinaigrette.

Enough for two, the platter featured marinated mushrooms, artichoke hearts, two cheeses, pepperoni and persicutto. I also sampled the lobster risotto, a cake made from risotto steamed in lobster and served with butterflyed grilled shrimp. Both were well prepared and beautifully presented.

For an entree, I had the lemon rosemary chicken, a rotisserie dish served with grilled vegetables and risotto, a starchy Italian rice. The vegetable/risotto combination was perfectly seasoned and beautifully presented. The chicken was tender, juicy and tangy.

For dessert, Jackie recommended the tiramisu with Kahlua, mascarpone cheese layered with lady fingers in a chocolate crust. Light and creamy, the dessert was perfect.

The Alfiere restaurant also features a fine wine list, with several good white wines available by the glass. One blush is available by the glass and six reds.

According to Hogan, The Alfiere will soon feature all wines by the glass during lunch.

The restaurant also features a fine lists of ports and, in an effort to please everyone, a cigar list including one of only four vintage cigars, a Macanudo Vintage 1988 No. 3 for \$19.50.

Another attraction is the pasta bar, which features pasta cooked to order with toss-ins that range from oysters and shrimp to an astounding variety of vegetables.

Definitely the perfect place to take a date.



PHOTO/ PAUL WILLIAMS III

Barry Hogan in front of The Alfiere restaurant. He's one of few African Americans managing fine dining establishments.

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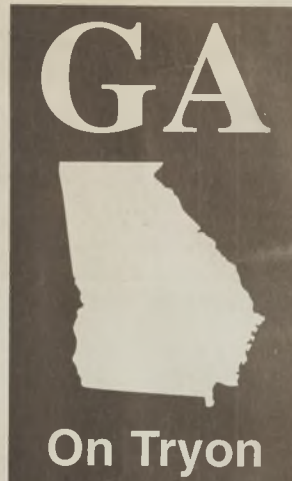
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