

## Upstaged, but not outdone by siblings

By Amy Graves, Globe Staff, May 22, 2003

Poor old Radius. The most celebrated restaurant opening of 1998, it had to share the limelight when Michael Schlow opened Via Matta just five years later. And Mistral, that celebrity magnet in the South End, has had to share the celebrities with Teatro, chef-owner Jamie Mammano's latest gambit in the Theater District. Even the venerable Rialto, where fans of Jody Adams and Michela Larson flocked, now has a younger sibling, blu, stealing the show.



Does anyone visit the old stars anymore? Now that their chef-owners have new distractions, are the meals or the service losing their luster? Is there a better assignment than to go on a round of meals to find out? And so we did.

At Mistral, the same 6 p.m. or 9 p.m. decision had to be made; this time we dined late. That was a mistake on a busy Friday when the bar was pulsating with loud music and chatter. It didn't help that our table was a few feet away from the din.

Teatro, Mammano's trattoria on Tremont Street, is equally loud and full of local celebs (I saw Gloria Larson and her husband, Alan, dining there two weeks ago). Both Teatro and Mistral menus tempt the carb-obsessed with pizza and linguine.

At Mistral, however, the serious temptations are French, with classic escargots swimming in butter, sirloin with bordelaise sauce, and salmon with a mustard and chardonnay vinaigrette.

The wine list is mesmerizingly long and precious, with most regions of the vine-growing world listed and nothing below \$45. I found a David Bruce petite syrah (from California) that went perfectly with the thick slab of sirloin, which came with tiny toasts spread with bone marrow. The meat passed muster with my mother, a farm-raised Midwesterner.

She had grilled Atlantic salmon, a clean-tasting filet enlivened by the mustard vinaigrette. Halibut, crispy and pan-seared with lemon risotto, was so good that it didn't need the accompanying rock shrimp, but they were firm morsels.

Because we ate late (entrees arrived at 10:30), we didn't stay for dessert. Our regrets to pastry chef Shane Gray for missing tapioca pudding with strawberry rhubarb compote, chocolate torte with Anglaise, and Belgian chocolate sorbet.