

Viva

14 Glendale Road (Rt. 183), Glendale, MA 01229

Phone: 413-298-4433

Web: <http://www.vivaberkshires.com/>

Visit: Friday, October 22, 2010

Profile

Cuisine: Authentic Spanish

Meals Served: Lunch and Dinner

Reservations: Suggested

Payment: Cash, Visa, MC, AMEX, and Discover

Dress Code: Casual

Year Opened: 2007

Seating for: 80

Special Features:

- Locally Grown Ingredients
- Full Bar
- Takeout Available

Hours: Lunch • Wed thru Sat • 11:30AM - 2PM

Dinner • Wed thru Sun • 5PM - 9PM

Full Dinner for Two with Drinks and Dessert (including Tax and Tip): ~\$90 • Basic Dinner for Two (including Tax and Tip): ~\$60

Food: ★★★ Atmosphere: ★★★★★ Service: ★★★★★
(Five Stars Maximum)

Late one Saturday night while driving home from Great Barrington, Tereza and I passed *Viva* Restaurant. We had driven past many times before but hadn't taken much notice. This time we both craned our necks as we passed. Although it was after 10 PM, it was obvious from the cars in the parking lot, the place was packed. At that moment we both resolved to pay *Viva* a visit ourselves.

We finally made it to *Viva* one Friday night late in October. We arrived at 7:30 PM to a quiet parking lot—surprising for a Friday night. Inside the restaurant was equally quiet with only a few other patrons dining.

First impression, *Viva's* dining room is spacious; a full bar and lounge are attached. The dark-stained wood interior gave the space a German-chalet feel; however, colorful Spanish gowns hung from the walls brought the ambiance back to España. A small gas fireplace brought warmth to the room. Always a sucker for fireplaces, I asked to be seated nearby.

The wait staff also made a good first impression; we were greeted promptly and pleasantly. Curious about the discrepancy between tonight and our previous Saturday night drive-by, we asked the waitress where everyone was. Apparently, Saturdays *Viva* hosts live entertainment such as Flamenco. Sounds like fun; we know for next time.

The first real decision to be made was: tapas or full entradas (or "entrée" for our non-Spanish speaking readers). I am a big fan of tapas. Thankfully, Tereza (my beautiful dining partner for life) agrees. That decided, the rest was simple negotiation of what to order and how much.

Though *Viva* offers a healthy sampling of cold tapas, we opted for hot tapas across the board. Their *Croquetas Cremosas* (or Creamy Croquettes) quickly caught our attention, but with Tereza being gluten-free, we steered clear of them. That left us with a fine sampling of *Alcachofas a la Romana* (Fried Artichokes), *Gambas al Ajillo* (Garlic Shrimp), *Tortilla Espanola* (Spanish Omlet), *Espinacas a la Catalana* (Sautéed Spinach), and *Chorizo a la Rioja* (Pork Sausage in a Red Wine Sauce).

Viva also offers a full bar including a broad selection of wines, so our drink options were plentiful. Tereza chose a glass of organic Spanish red wine, while I partook of one of the house favorites: a margarita. Our drinks arrived promptly, accompanied by warm *French* bread slices (baked in-house). The bread was good; not great, but good. Tereza enjoyed her wine, and I thought my margarita was excellent. (Later, I followed this traditional margarita with their Cadillac Margarita, which is orange-based—not nearly as good as the original.)

Without much wait, our tapas began to arrive; first up, the fried artichokes. What a wonderful beginning. When we ordered the dish we didn't know what to expect. Like most of our dining experiences, we look for uniqueness. This was definitely unique. Prepared tossed lightly with salt and fried until crisp, they came served with a lemon-thyme aioli which paired nicely with the artichoke flavor. Some guidance was required; eat from the heart end, as far up as you can reasonably chew. Delicious; we could have eaten many more.

Sadly, the remainder of the tapas dishes didn't stand up to the standard set by the *Alcachofas a la Romana*. The shrimp were served swimming in a watery garlic, lemon, and white wine sauce. The chorizo, though somewhat better than the shrimp, were similarly swimming in a so-so red wine sauce. Both lacked any kind of pleasing presentation.

The saving grace of the latter tapas dishes was the *Tortilla Espanola*. Tereza likes to make a version of this at home. The *Viva* version was light and tasty. The portion was a bit on the small side, even for tapas, but well worth it nonetheless. If you are a spinach-lover, you would likely be happy with the large sautéed spinach plate. I'm not, but Tereza is; it got her seal-of-approval.

For dessert I had the flan (or Crème Caramel) and Tereza opted out. Most desserts are made in-house. For me, the flan was much too eggy. As I've written before, I consider myself an aficionado of custard desserts. *Viva's* flan needs improvement. Having said that, despite Tereza's initial disinterest, she didn't hesitate to finish off the flan I didn't want.

With all the great restaurants in the Berkshires, it's unlikely that we'll return to *Viva* anytime soon, but if we do, it'll be for platefuls of fried artichokes, numerous margaritas, and Flamenco night.

One last note, if you're looking for paellas in the Berkshires, we understand *Viva* is the place to go.