

## An institution you can bank on OUR GOURMET: RESTAURANT REVIEWS UNION LEADER.com

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Of course it's fitting that the rich atmosphere and rich Italian sauces at Villa Banca are in keeping with its location in a former Main Street bank, but beyond the clichés is the true DNA of one of New Hampshire's best restaurants.

### Atmosphere 18/20

**Our Gourmet:** Yes, there's a crow's nest-style lookout booth above the front door for security — bank style, not nautical — plus a bank vault door and deposit-area steel bars for decoration, but the plush underpinnings of Villa Banca are in its sectioned dining areas, marble tile floors, cloth table coverings and deep, rich hardwood walls and furniture. It just looks delicious. 9/10

**The Dining Companion:** Mauve, fresco-style walls and carefully selected artwork adorn the restaurant's interior, which is soft and comfortable compared to its solid stone exterior. Gold and brown and silver wall hangings lend a plush color-scheme. Black-suited waiters are de rigueur. None of that has anything to do with the food, but it certainly puts you in the mood. 9/10

### Menu 19/20

**OG:** A word to the wise: Have a glass of wine and an appetizer while you peruse the menu, slowly — it is simply too vast and too tempting to leave a word unread. Seafood, veal, beef, turkey, chicken, lobster, soups and salads, nearly a dozen sauces, and of course pasta, pasta pasta! The exclamation point in Villa Banca's slogan — "Everybody mangia!" — is not out of place. It is a marvelous, vast menu. 10/10

**TDC:** How are these for succulent ideas for a menu: Balsamic roasted pears (on the Pear Salad, \$6.99); olives and feta cheese on a Warm Spinach Salad (\$6.99) with a bacon vinaigrette; or four distinct mushroom varieties sautéed in a cognac cream sauce in the Risotto alla Boscaiola entree (\$14.99)? We could go on and on. And if you order a Caesar Salad (\$3.99) and you "Want the little fish?" just ask, as the menu says. 9/10

### Appetizers 18/20

**OG:** With a nice glass of Mojo Sangiovese (\$6.50) and the now-traditional olive-oil dipped bread starter, I was very reluctant to share with TDC my Lobster Cake (\$9.99), which was so much better than any crab cake I have ever had. It was large and thick, nice and hot, and delicately beefed up with an accompanying horseradish-cucumber-dill sour cream sauce and fresh tomato-red onion relish. Magnifico! 9/10

Villa Banca  
194 Main St., Nashua  
598-0500 [www.villabanca.com](http://www.villabanca.com)

**Serving:** Monday-Thursday, 11:30 a.m.-9 p.m.  
Friday: 11:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.; Saturday: 4 to 10 p.m.; Sunday: 4 to 8 p.m.

**Cuisine:** Italian

**Entrees:** \$14.99 to \$26.99

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**TDC:** I was not particularly mindful of sharing either, because my Duck-Stuffed Portobello Mushrooms (\$7.99, a special this night) with a sweet glaze sauce and a nice little helping of field greens were nearly to die for. There were, however, four of them, so I gave OG a taste. 9/10

**Entree 19/20**

**OG:** I had a devil of a time deciding between Frutti Di Mare (\$23.99) and Veal and Lobster (\$21.99) — and everyone should have such a dilemma. The abundance of seafood in the Di Mare dish was superbly tempting, but the white-wine lemon-butter sauce accompanying the sauteed, lightly-breaded veal scalopini won me over, plus the grace of mozzarella cheese throughout the dish, its generous helping of lobster chunks, and broccoli, served over farfalle. A very rich, filling meal, with lip-smacking taste start to finish (and a small lunch the next day). If you like veal and lobster, mangia! 10/10

**TDC:** I continued my attention to specials and ordered the Catch of the Day (\$22.99), which was lobster-stuffed sole in a creamy lobster cream sauce with a hint of basil, also with broccoli. The Catch was two large filets of sole, absolutely stuffed with large, fresh pieces of lobster, and served over penne pasta. I was very pleased and would recommend this to anyone who enjoys Italian-style seafood. 9/10

**Service/Value: 18/20**

**OG:** Our server, Michael, was one of those waiters who is earnest but knowledgeable, gracious but easy-going, and very attentive but not a bit pushy. Our water glasses were always full, we had refills on our wine right away if we so desired, and our menu choices were backed up with his comments of delight that showed us he loves where he works, especially the food. Service in the tough New Hampshire restaurant business is often good, but it is rarely so enjoyable. 9/10

**TDC:** Villa Banca has kept the lid on its prices for some years now, testimony to its popularity, perhaps, and likely the mark of a solid business that enjoys its success and knows reasonable pricing will always win out. But for this style of gourmet cooking, presentation and ambience, we would expect to pay well over \$100 for the meal. Our wonderful experience at Villa Banca, which included two glasses of wine each, two appetizers, and two of the most expensive items on the menu, came in under \$95, not including tip. That's excellent value. 9/10

**Total 92/100**

*Do you have a favorite restaurant that you'd like to see reviewed? Drop us a line at [gourmet@unionleader.com](mailto:gourmet@unionleader.com).*