

## DINING OUT

# Tower restaurant on top of the world

## Panorama not just for tourists

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FOR THE CALGARY HERALD

Calvin Trillin, food writer and New Yorker contributor, said "I never eat in a restaurant that's over a hundred feet off the ground and won't stand still." Clearly, no one had ever taken him for a meal to the Calgary Tower's Panorama dining room where, on a clear day, he'd have been able to see Vancouver in the west and Toronto in the east. And he would have been impressed with the food, too.

How long has it been since you've had a meal in the Calgary Tower's Panorama dining room? Years? Never? Are you one of those Calgarians who

thinks the Tower is only for tourists? If you think this, you are missing out on some fine food and a bird's eye view of our city that never wears thin. The Panorama room, which has gone through many transformations in its long lifetime, has hit a confident stride. You can be proud to take yourself, your loved ones, your out-of-towners to the Tower for a meal.

Chef Philip Gomes and his kitchen have to please many palates, from the most conservative to the most adventurous. It is a challenge, but one that he is equal to.

The Man and I discovered that, dollar for dollar (and the dollars flow freely these days), Gomes's food is at least as good as anything comparable at street level. And our server was not only charming and efficient, she was as knowledgeable about the fine selection of wine offered as she was about the food.

The menu offers a wide range of interesting fare, from a Rocky Mountain meat and seafood appetizer platter for two and prairie chowder to rainbow trout and prawns, butternut gnocchi, and black truffle beef tenderloin. We started with a martini glass of plump shrimp perched atop a tangy salsa spiked with crisp flour tortilla triangles for scooping (\$12). The Tower caesar is elegant: a composed salad of grilled hearts of romaine with a roasted garlic citrus dressing, shavings of asiago, crisp strips of prosciutto and crisp croutons (\$10).

Oh my, this was good. Lots of texture and flavour.

Risotto lovers will crave the wild mushroom risotto with lashings of spinach and caramelized shallots, topped with toasted pine nuts and shaved asiago (\$19).

Delicate pea shoot garnishes are everywhere, including on a fine grilled

bison rib-eye which should be cooked medium rare to give it a bit of firmness (\$46; only two of 11 mains are priced in the 40s). This is delightfully done up with a dried cherry relish and drizzles of port and balsamic vinaigrette, accompanied by sour cream mashed and perfectly cooked beets, carrots, sweet peppers and asparagus.

Beautifully prepared food, beautifully presented and in satisfying quantity. We drank a Chilean carmenere and a juicy, rich Sokol Blosser (Dundee, Oregon) "Meditrina", an interesting blend of 50 per cent pinot noir and 25 per cent each of syrah and zinfandel. Yum.

If you're in a romantic state of mind, ask for one of the window-facing alcoves.

No one will know you're there except your server. You may BYOW for a \$25 corkage fee. Elevation charge is half price with reservation.

**Panorama Dining Room,  
Calgary Tower**  
101 - 9th Ave. S.W.  
508-5822

**Food:** very good  
**Service:** charming, attentive  
**Specialty:** Canadian regional  
**Prices:** \$19 to \$46  
**Hours:** 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Monday to Saturday; 5:30 p.m. to 9 p.m., daily  
**Credit:** Visa, Amex, MasterCard, Interac  
**Reservations:** recommended  
**Parking:** Calgary Tower parkade  
**Wheelchair access:** yes  
**Washrooms:** clean; wheelchair facilities on Observation deck via elevator  
**No-smoking area:** no smoking throughout  
**Licensed:** yes