

Locale Profile: A Patio with Purpose: **Ciro's Tavern** will leave you feeling transported

There is no shortage of waterfront dining in the Ocean State. But there's a hidden gem of an outdoor patio far from the water in a most unlikely location: **Ciro's Tavern** in Woonsocket.

Located just off Main Street, **Ciro's Tavern** looks much like a fairy tale castle from the outside. A heavy, wooden front door leads patrons into the four-story stone structure, depositing them in the main dining area complete with a wonderful old bar and a rich history: Since its construction in 1893, parts of the Tudor-style building have been used as a liquor store, a brothel and a cafe.

Adjacent to the main dining area is the Outdoor Courtyard Patio and Bar, and although it is mere steps from downtown Woonsocket, you can neither see nor hear the hustle and bustle of downtown. Contained within walls and thick shrubs, the patio is a destination unto itself. A deck hosts a full bar and several shaded high-top tables. A few steps away, a huge outdoor fireplace surrounded by couches and soft chairs offers larger parties a comfortable place to sprawl with drinks. More tables intermingled with big potted plants are scattered throughout the rest of the patio.

Happy hour is alive and well on **Ciro's** courtyard. My husband and I recently showed up on a sunny Wednesday at 5:30 and found ourselves in good company with a substantial after-work crowd. We snagged a table in dappled shade, and, after a beer and a glass of wine, decided to go all the way and order dinner. We were not disappointed.

The exquisite harvest salad, which happens to be gluten-free, consists of field greens, warm butternut squash, toasted pine nuts, shaved parmesan, chopped bacon and maple-infused vinaigrette. I ordered my salad with shrimp, and they were jumbo, grilled and delicious. I found myself barely talking while I ate so that I could savor every bite completely.

My husband ordered the lemon shrimp risotto. Risotto is a tricky dish: Too much cream can overpower the other ingredients and leave you feeling uncomfortably full. This dish, however, achieved what many risottos do not: a perfect balance of creamy and light. Again, the shrimp were standout — large, grilled and juicy.

We shared our food, left our plates clean and felt transported, thanks to the patio and outdoor ambiance. And that's really what we all want when we go out to eat, isn't it? Great food and an experience that feels special — a deviation from the usual time and place we inhabit in our regular lives. And we didn't even have to fight the beach traffic.

Ciro's Tavern, 42 Cherry St, Woonsocket