

All about Friends

Gather your mates and head to Serangoon Gardens for this cheery, cosy eatery

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I'VE NEVER actually gone to Serangoon Gardens Village for a meal until a friend suggested that I check out Friends, a semi-fine-dining neighbourhood restaurant.

Opened a year ago, this place has gained popularity among Serangoon Garden residents, regulars and wine buffs.

The tastefully decorated restaurant boasts a sleek walk-in wine cellar offering about 200 labels from around the world as well as a casual *al fresco* area.

The people behind Friends are general manager, Babu who has a decade of food and beverage (F&B) experience at Oaks Grill & Bar at Tanglin Mall and his business partner Jane Giam. Working alongside them is Chef Peter Boon, also previously from Oaks.

Food wise, the chef places much emphasis on the weekly specials – which is accompanied by helpful wine suggestions – and uses a lot of seasonal produce for his modern European dishes.

To tantalise our tastebuds, he prepared some of his specials which included grilled chicken kebabs skewered with peppers and onions, as well as grilled *maguro* served on a bed of *wakame* (Japanese seaweed).

Both dishes were skilfully executed – the cubes of chicken were charred until the aroma filled the air.

Yet, it remained tender, and the fish slices were pink in the centre and nicely



JASON HO

WARM TREATS: Friends' Valrhona chocolate cake (above) is for those who love bitter chocolate. Chef Peter Boon (inset) presides over the kitchen.



WINING AND DINING: The walk-in wine cellar (left) carries more than 200 labels to compliment the house speciality dish of braised veal shank (extreme left).

seared on the outside.

One of the signature dishes from the *a la carte* menu that stood out was the braised veal shank – the meat was so tender it fell off the bone when we dug into it.

The meat was cooked in garlic, tomato, rosemary and veal jus, and served with mashed potatoes, carrots and celery.

The goose liver was pretty good, too. Perfectly pan-fried, its richness was balanced by the sweet and tangy strawberries laced with raspberry *balsamico* glaze.

However, after a pleasing succession of dishes, the desserts turned out to be rather mediocre.

I've had better versions of the warm Valrhona chocolate cake elsewhere as this rendition was a little too bitter for me.

The coffee caramel was decent but nothing to shout about.

If you like to have wines with your

meal, do request for the wine list – which focuses largely on Australian labels.

It also features some South African, Chilean, American, French, Italian, Spanish and Israeli wines. The restaurant also organises wine din-

ners featuring guest winemakers from around the world, so do look out for that.

Though the location of this place may be a little remote, it is worth giving it a try if you are in the neighbourhood. The overall dining experience is enjoyable and you don't have to dig too deep into your pocket to enjoy quality food.

Bonus points for the knowledgeable and well-trained staff – a rarity in Singapore.

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TELEPHONE: 6289 2600
OPENING HOURS: NOON TO MIDNIGHT
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