



Tonic

1316 Comm Ave., Boston 617.566.6699
Mon-Sat, 11:30am-1am; Sun, 10am-1am
by Matuya Brand

A snazzy metropolitan joint that seems plucked out of Manhattan and plopped into a collegiate tenement zone (also the former home of the Northeast Brewing Company), Tonic is best known for being an upscale alternative to the dive bars of Allston.

The omnipresent red lights made the restaurant reminiscent of an Amsterdam brothel and were not nearly enough to illuminate the huge locale. There must be some truth to intuition, however, because despite our relative blindness, both my dining companion and I chose satisfying dishes.

The only gastronomically flawed item was my appetizer, whose taste suggested more a Styrofoam cup than the ravioli with marinara sauce the menu quoted. The ravioli was excessively crunchy on the outside, and all I could taste was the internal cheese. Not only was the taste off-key, but the six lonesome squares were not nearly large enough to hide the excessive garnish and be worth the \$7.95 they cost.

I decided not to succumb to the enticing description of the chicken and pear pannis (\$9.75), served with caramelized onions and Brie cheese, and got pizza instead. The buffalo chicken flatbread pizza (\$9.95) was extra hot, so if you like it that way, you're in for a treat. A pizza at Tonic can easily feed two or three people. The chicken was succulent, and everything was delightfully fresh.

My companion tried the NY steak sirloin, the most expensive meal on the menu (\$15.95). The steak was cooked to a perfect medium with a side (you pick these) of hearty fries and onion strings. These so-called strings are really just sophisticated, pricey onion rings, and incidentally the best onion rings known to the palate. Their crunch and batter factors were nothing short of excellent.

Vegetarians should try the apple and walnut soup (\$7) or one of the various pastas (\$11.95-\$14.95). Along with the savory meals, Tonic's extensive bar features 12 beers on tap along with various bottled options, martinis, champagne and still wine.

The highlight of the bar is a contraption called a table tapper. Table tappers look like obese bongos, but in actuality, they're three-foot vessels of cold beer delivered to your table. It's genius: By investing in one of these, your table fights the crowd less for the next round, and less tipping is necessary.

The food took an agonizingly long time to come out, despite the almost empty dining room; but the service was amazing enough to possibly skew my opinion on the other facets of the dining experience. I'd originally thought that good looks and head-to-toe black outfits were all it took to work at Tonic, but everyone was gracious and helpful.

Lighting aside, the dining area was a plus. Tonic's chairs are all incredibly comfortable, and the spacious eatery has various flat screen TVs and enormous mirrors on the wall so that everyone can have a glimpse of the game whether they face the TV or not.

Extra perks at post-meal Tonic include theme nights. Mafia Mondays begin the week, featuring Sopranos drinks from Effen Vodka, trivia, prizes and promo models. Wednesdays are Box Office nights where old-school movies play at 9pm, and Thirsty Thursdays mean dancing in the Met Lounge.

Tonic is not limited to late meals and nighttime fun. Brunch is available on weekends; and in particular, Sunday brunch is buffet-style (\$14.95/\$7.95 for children under 12), complete with an omelet station, fruit, meats, breads, cereal and dessert.

Even if you don't like Tonic the bar, the overall dining experience at the restaurant is worth a chance. You can easily ignore the metro glitter in light of Tonic's tasty edge.