



## **Off the Menu: Ch-ch-ch-changes**

As the calendar turns to summer, local menus are starting to take advantage of the season's harvest. Sunday night, I visited Estéban and tried some of the new tapas the kitchen is serving up for summer.

There's a new pan de tomato pinxto (\$2) with a very flavorful roasted tomato atop a crunchy bite of bread that's a Spanish nod to Italian bruschetta.

Mushrooms, grilled with garlic and sherry vinegar (\$7.50), were rich and flavorful, but I'm so trained to expect mushrooms paired with polenta or risotto so that on their own, they felt a little incomplete.

And one of my favorite tapas — the grilled peach, with goat cheese and spinach (\$6) — is back on the menu now that peaches are in season.

Estéban has also beefed up its selection of meat tapas, including a "crispy duck," served with purslane, wine-soaked cherries and almonds (\$10.50) and pork cheeks, with corn pudding and roasted cherry tomatoes (\$13).

Sadly, the "crispy" duck wasn't very crispy — it's really just shredded duck confit. While the meat was tender, I missed that bite of crispy skin that always makes my heart swoon when I order duck confit.

I also wasn't a fan of the purslane — a leafy vegetable with a bitter bite that didn't quite play well with the rest of the dish.

The pork cheeks, however, were far tastier. The meat was so soft and succulent, slow-roasted in a wine sauce. The roasted tomatoes were a nice touch, as was the corn pudding.

*Try some of Estéban's new tapas yourself in the Casa Munras Hotel at 700 Munras Ave., Monterey.*