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**Prandial Pleasure - I'll have the rattlesnake**

By Anna Selby

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* To say that Torrey is a small town is something of an understatement, even by Utah standards. At the eastern end of Scenic Byway 12 - a road that passes through some of the most ruggedly beautiful landscapes in the US - it is really more of a hamlet. It was named Torrey in 1898 when the post office opened. Not a lot has happened since.

So it is a surprise to find a restaurant there that not only produces cooking of the highest standard but is innovative both in its presentation and its ingredients. Chef Gary Pankow trained at the Culinary Institute of America but has left the East Coast far behind. Cafe Diablo's kitchen is fashionably open to the diners' inspection but its walls are decorated with native art from the south-west, there is music provided by a country and western duo and the dress code is as far from formal as it gets.

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The food, though, is essentially serious. It may be decorated with extravagant edible shapes - long, crispy plantains or pitchfork shaped parmesan and garlic potato straws - but the flavours are faultless and indisputably south-western. The trout comes coated with pumpkin seeds with a wild rice pancake. There are empanadas filled with local cheese, and sweet potatoes on black bean sauce and desert onions. Baby pork ribs are slow roasted in molasses and rum.

There was one thing on the menu, though, I just had to try. The rattlesnake cakes are made, I was assured, from free-range desert rattlers - quite how they are persuaded to make their final journey to the pan is an interesting subject to muse on while you wait. I was a little unsure what to expect but they were delicious - like big spicy fish cakes served with an ancho-rosemary aioli. The one thing I couldn't make out was what were the little white balls on top of the patties? Gary explained they were made of semolina - and there to represent the snake's eyes.

Cafe Diablo, 001 435 425 3070, 559 West Main, Torrey, Utah 84775. www.cafediablo.net