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Grill 83, located inside The Madison Hotel, Downtown Memphis, is a shining example of tradition with an updated flare. Often, fine dining restaurants neglect the lettuce nibblers, offering only token choices like Caesar or house salads. Not the case at the Madison grill. Executive Chef Clay Lichterman takes great pride in the wide selections available for the salad course. Of the many indulgences, my favorite dish was the Baby Beets Salad: yellow and red beets with crumbled blue cheese, mixed greens and walnut vinaigrette. It might sound a bit odd but the warm poached beets melt the crumbles of blue cheese making it soft and yummy, while the walnut vinaigrette adds just the right amount of tartness to balance the whole thing. The mixed greens are really just there to allay the guilt of eating warm cheese and nuts, if you ask me, but hey, what's a salad without the lettuce.

Another favorite was the tuna tartar. In today's blackened, miso-encrusted, lightly-seared world, one would expect an exuberant lofty title like "Asian Fusion Sashimi or Ahi Grade Tuna Something-or-other". It was a refreshing change of pace to see "tartar" on the menu. Julia Childs would approve. The entire meal was elegantly displayed and rich with comforting good tastes that calm and soothe the palate like the traditional steak and mash, or the slightly more modern skate wing. Though Chef Lichterman's menu was original, there was a sense of safety in his judgment that made me feel that any surprises would end in felicity, not fiasco. Definitely a place you can feel confident in trying something new, a solid pick for meetings and first dates. For reservations call (901) 333-1224; located at 83 Madison Avenue.