

Newport Beach Restaurant Week Review

My friend and I were excited to see Newport Beach Restaurant Week in many local papers. I checked out newportbeachdining.com and printed the list of restaurants with telephone numbers. That was convenient. I then highlighted all the ones I wanted to visit. I'm a big time foodie and live local. I have also been lucky enough to win a couple recipe contests. I appreciate good quality food. My friend and I had to negotiate and narrow down our restaurant lists, since it was only taking place January 21-25, 2007. We finally made our list, The Ritz on Monday for lunch, 21 Oceanfront on Wednesday for dinner, and The Arches on Thursday for lunch.

MONDAY: It had been about seven years since I had been to The Ritz. I realized that I really missed it. It's welcoming, classy and their food is still perfectly prepared. I had the Poached Salmon with Dijon Sauce and my friend had the Steak Diane. Both dishes were superb. We also enjoyed the Mushroom Cappuccino Soup -- mushroom soup prepared to look like a cup of cappuccino. For the dessert choice, I selected the dessert sampler, which is always fun. It included an adorable mini Crème Brulee. They offered great choices on their Prix-Fixe Menu.

Then on **WEDNESDAY** my friend and I met at 21 Oceanfront for dinner. I loved the tall black leather booths and the gorgeous view. Their Prix-Fixe Menu offered a balanced selection of three different entrees. We had made our selections. I was going to have the Pork Chops with Wild Mushroom Sauce, but then I started wandering through the regular menu and fell in love with several appetizers. To be honest, we ended up ordering from the regular menu. I ordered the Beef Carpaccio and Oysters Rockefeller, two dishes I can rarely resist when I see them. And my friend ordered the Petite Lamb Chops and the Shrimp Scampi. We ate every single morsel with delight. In addition, they served bread with Tempande. I ate the entire serving while my friend was talking. It was very flavorful with more of a green olive flavor. I am missing its flavor while writing this.

THURSDAY: On the last day of Newport Beach Restaurant Week, we successfully met at The Arches for lunch. It was another pleasant escape into the old school style restaurant, with curved leather booths and nice lighting. It was really hard to narrow down a choice from their Prix-Fixe Menu. All dishes sounded appetizing. I ultimately chose the Sandabs with Lemon Caper Sauce, a fish I don't commonly see offered. The portion was very generous and they were wonderful. I didn't think I was going to be able to finish them, but I did. My friend ordered the Gourmet Burger, which I also briefly considered. It looked really good and she was very happy with it. I hear the Restaurant will be relocating at some point. I should have asked for the scoop. I will need to do that. We finished our lunch with Cherries Jubilee – Not too shabby.

Newport Beach Restaurant Week offered a fun opportunity to experience top quality food at local restaurants. Now I am ready to go to the other restaurants still highlighted on my list -- French 75, The Bungalow, Oysters, etc. Also, as I was walking to meet my friend at 21 Oceanfront, I passed IL Farro Restaurant. The scent of its food was very enticing. I had to pick up a menu. Its selection and prices were also appealing. I wanted to visit all the restaurants, but in 5 days one can only afford to eat so much.

Last but not least, while reading the Restaurant Week display banner, I was also happy to see it benefiting The First Battalion First Marines of Camp Pendleton and their Families. That's a good thing. Maybe next time it can be called Newport Beach Restaurant "Two" Weeks?!

By, Shelly Borrell,
Costa Mesa, California