

The Marine Room — The real deal for Restaurant Week

San Diego Dining

By David Rottenberg

Restaurant Week is coming up. Once again, San Diego diners will have the chance to experience new or favorite restaurants through special menus at reduced prices. From Sunday, Sept. 13 through Friday, Sept. 18, many participating restaurants will offer three-course meals (appetizer, entrée and dessert) at prices that range from \$20-\$40, depending on the location and selections. It is one of the most popular weeks of the year to dine out.

"We don't make any money on these menus," Marine Room's executive chef Bernard Guillas said. "It gives us a chance to introduce ourselves and what we can do to new customers." The Marine Room, on the beach in La Jolla, is on the top of my list.

My attitude, when offered deals like those of Restaurant Week, is to go for the best. I want to try those places that are unique and serve enticing food. I'll go where I haven't gone before or where I may go only on special occasions. I want to dine where a deal is a real deal. I want to try those places where I think I might become a regular. The Marine Room is perfect.

The Marine Room, along with its sister properties (La Jolla Beach & Tennis Club, La Jolla Shores Hotel, The Shores Restaurant) is a stone's throw from the undulating surf. Its bar and dining rooms offer clear, unobstructed views of the ocean and shore to the north and south. At night, the sand is lit with indirect lighting so one can still see luminescent wavetops. The sand is packed hard, so people walk by the windows. Families carrying babies, athletic joggers and people with pets add to the magic of the scene.

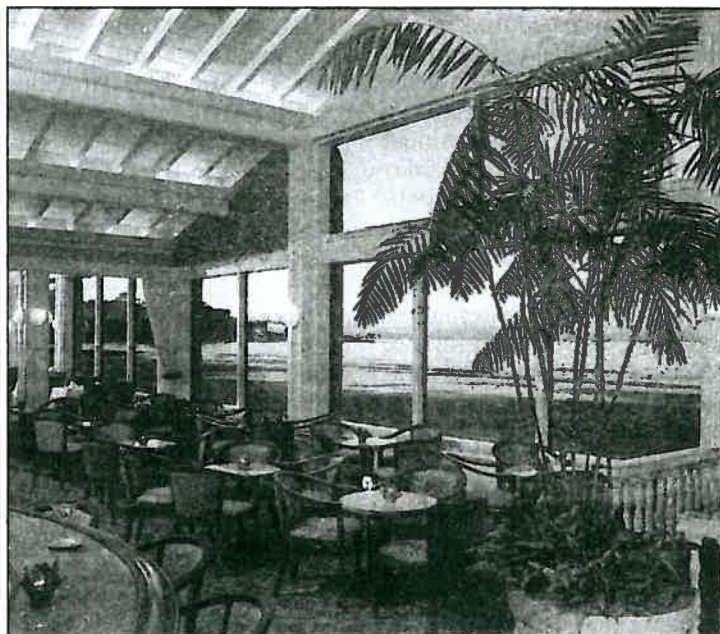
The entrance to the restau-

rant, at the end of a large parking lot where valet parking is available, is on the second level. One descends past a small aquarium to the dining level. A large bar area separates the two dining rooms on either side of the building. The first impression, as one walks down the stairs, is of the magnificent view, seen through large glass windows. The interiors are elegant but casual, comfortable but sedate. It feels very much like entering the parlor of an elderly aunt.

Bernard Guillas, the executive chef for all the properties, is a leading light of San Diego's culinary scene. Despite his busy schedule, he finds time to share his knowledge and inspirations with many public lectures and demonstrations in conjunction with a local department store chain. He prepares his delightful dishes at many charity events to raise funds for worthy causes. He and his Chef de Cuisine Ron Oliver are publishing a new cookbook in November that will probably become a bible in many kitchens. Guillas has done much to elevate San Diego's culinary profile.

"We offer artistry as well as taste," Guillas said, referring to the beautiful presentations of his dishes. The cuisine is global with French traditions. Guillas develops dishes with accents from all over the world, changing his menus seasonally to take advantage of the fresh bounties available at local farms. "Travel, travel, travel... that's one of the most important things a chef can do. And, he must learn while doing so."

Oysters are one of the most popular starters, topped with caviar. They are full bodied and taste of the sea. The Lobster Bisque, with Enokis (a tasty Japanese mushroom), Pancetta, and Yuzu (a Japanese citrus) Cream, is a taste sensation. The wonderful fragrance and flavor of lob-



The Marine Room bar and dining room offer terrific views of the La Jolla shoreline and ocean.

ster makes this dish very satisfying. Macadamia Sansho Spiced Wild Prawns with tabouleh (Arabic rice) and espelette (Basque pepper) aioli demonstrate the worldly range of ingredients and culinary blendings.

Entrees include Butter Roasted Lobster Tail and Black Angus Center Cut Filet Mignon.

The Fulton Valley Chicken Breast with Star Madeira Anise Jus combined fabulously prepared poultry with a remarkable sauce. One of the chef's specials that evening, Pompano With Scallops featured a beautifully grilled deep water Gulf fish with large, firm excellent-tasting scallops, topped with almonds to add flavor and crunch.

The desserts to try, I suggest, are the Carlsbad Strawberry and Peach Cobbler with honey wildflower ice cream for a linger-

ing taste of summer.

The Marine Room has received numerous awards including "Best of the Best, Money No Object," "Best Restaurant with a View," "Most Romantic Restaurant" and "Best Service." Consistent with its quality, it is usually expensive to dine there. That's why it is such a "real deal" during Restaurant Week.

Book early, book often. The Marine Room is located at 2000 Spindrift Drive in La Jolla. For reservations, information and directions, call 858-459-7222. For more information about Restaurant Week and other participating restaurants, visit sandiegorestaurantweek.com.

Rottenberg is editor of Dining San Diego Magazine, and a member of the California Restaurant Writers Association.

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