

eating my way through oc

tuesday, July 19, 2016

Taking a Dip at Splashes



Splashes at the Surf and Sand Resort

1555 South Coast Highway

Laguna Beach, CA 92651

I do not take advantage of the beautiful coastline of Orange County nearly enough. I realize this almost every time that I drive to one of our beach cities, and can visually see the water through my dusty windshield. The picturesque ocean view always takes my breath away. I'm always thinking to myself, why am I not down here more often. Then I remember that I'm part of the pasty posse. The sun and I do not mix too well, as my snow white skin usually burns in about ten minutes of exposure. Katie's right there with me, so it seems the only time we make it to experience the beach is when we get the chance to dine at the shore, which we had the opportunity to do

recently at the Surf and Sand Resort in beautiful Laguna.

Every time we are at this beach front resort, we are instantly transported into vacation mode. You can honestly feel the stresses of your workday wash away with the tide. We were invited to this sun kissed resort to meet their new, or I should say, new to us chef, Chef Ron Fougeray, who has the pleasure of working in this beautiful paradise. With views like this, I wouldn't get much done, but I'm generally a lazy person.

Chef Fougeray comes to us from Philadelphia, where he built up a pretty impressive resume. After graduating from culinary school, Chef Ron went through a snow storm to meet with famous chef, Georges Perrier of Le Bec-Fin, and agreed to work for free for him, just to get a start in the business. Three months after that he was hired, and worked every station in the restaurant, until the business was sold six years later. He then moved on to another French restaurant, the critically acclaimed Bibou BYOB, where he would be named Executive Chef in 2013, and win a whole host of accolades, including being named a finalist for a James Beard Award as Best New Restaurant. Alas, he would leave this prestigious position as a promise to his OC raised wife, that they would move back to her beloved Orange County, and the much more cordial weather.

Philly's loss is the Surf and Sand's gain, as he took over the kitchen almost a year ago. His predecessor at Splashes was more Asian influenced culinary wise, while Chef Ron is of course much more trained in the French style of cooking. This has lead to a complete overhaul of the menu at Splashes, which has been a big hit with the guests of the resort and the locals that flock here for stunning views and world class cuisine. They were going to be featuring Chef Ron's Summer Menu on this evening, which all of us food media were all looking forward to experiencing.







I couldn't resist adding a few more pictures of the spectacular view we experienced. We did get cheated of a sunset because the clouds rolled in, but beautiful nonetheless. We were met with a glass of wine, and situated on a patio right above the pool deck. It took every ounce of my being not to strip off my clothes and join the other vacationers having a great time in the water, but I knew I had some eating to do on this evening.





When I was growing up, I would have never have guessed that Brussels sprouts would be as big as they have gotten. I never really had a bad association with them like a lot of my friends, because my mom never made them. These are not your mother's Brussels Sprouts (\$17). They came with a lighter touch than most restaurants deliver, with a splotch of cranberry puree streaking across the plate, along with lardons, dried mulberries, and a

watermelon radish julienne. I really liked this summer version of this classic veggie side item. Of course I could have handled more lardons in this, but those little pieces of pork made themselves known, and still allowed the Brussels sprouts to be the star of the show. I was not even bothered by the inclusion of fruits with vegetables like I usually am. A very nice dish with a good array of textures, which kept me interested.





Not on the summer menu, but I think Chef Ron wanted to show off some of the things he picked up on a working vacation he recently took to France with the other JC Resort chefs. This Salmon dish had us all smiling. The salmon was rubbed with peppercorns and espresso grounds, and came with a mustard-mango sauce and a fresh herb salad. The salmon was cooked wonderfully, and the rub did not overpower the natural flavor of the fish, but enhanced it. I liked the sauce well enough, which is a big statement considering I'm not really into mustard or mango. Look for this to make an appearance at Splashes soon, if we have anything to say about it.





Back to the summer menu, and when you think of summer, soup is probably not something you think of, but at Splashes they offer this Chilled Cantaloupe Soup (\$15). This is prepared table side, with a dramatic flair which I always enjoy. Little bits of duck prosciutto and mint oil join an orb of melon sorbet, as a cantaloupe and honeydew soup is poured over the top. Unique flavor profile, and refreshing are what came to mind when I ate this. I'm not really into melons, but I think the duck and mint oil kind of softened the sweetness here, and made for a lovely chilled soup that can be enjoyed fully once the temperatures reach the triple digits in a month or so.



Ahi has really hit the mainstream, as you can now get it in any strip mall across OC, but not as fresh and delicious as this Ahi Tuna Crudo (\$19). Chef Ron adds a whole slew of items to these dice sized tuna cubes; cured black olives, jicama, raspberry vinegar, mustard oil, cucumber, and an excellent avocado mousse. It's not overly dressed, and the avocado mousse really comes through at the most opportune times.



Lastly, we are just steps from the ocean, so of course more seafood was needed for our last savory item of this evening. This Bay Scallop Ceviche was a fitting end to our evening at the Surf and Sand Resort. Good sized hunks of scallops were served alongside cucumber, radish, dill, celery leaves, citrus supreme, and verde jus. There were notes of citrus, along with a freshness that most restaurants seem to miss when preparing ceviche. I liked this reworked take on this classic dish.





Desserts are something special at Splashes, and we were lucky enough to finish with this Mango Meringue Tart (\$13). I'm always partial to non-fruit desserts, but this dessert might have shown me that there is some merit to non-chocolate desserts. This tart had three distinct layers to it. The mango puree was sandwiched by a praline crumble on the bottom, and a very well done and eye pleasing meringue topping this. Not overly sweet, but you knew you were having a dessert item.

This was just a sampling of what Chef Ron has in store for his guests when they visit the Surf and Sand Resort. The Grilled Lamb Loin, Duck Breast and Halibut are on my radar for the next time we eat at Splashes, but I'm sure Chef Ron will have some nightly specials that may entice me as well. Perfect for out of town guests, or locals who want to take advantage of where we live, Splashes at the Surf and Sand will not fail to delight.

For more information about the Surf and Sand Resort and Splashes Restaurant, click here: <http://www.surfandsandresort.com/splashes/>