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Herringbone a Hit in La Jolla | Take the Experience

September 5, 2012

We rooted for Chef Amanda Baumgarten as she competed for the *Top Chef* title on the 7th Season of Bravo's popular culinary competition, so [when the news broke](#) that she would be running the kitchen at fellow *Top Chef* Brian Malarkey's 5th installment of his famed fabric-named franchise of eateries, we were extremely exuberant and expectant. No longer in its 'newby' phase, [Herringbone](#) is now a La Jolla hotspot, and rightfully so as the restaurant is exceptionally designed to appeal to those seeking upscale, casual, or anywhere in between, and with the young and energetic Chef Amanda in charge of the output, Herringbone delivers in bringing the 'hip' to La Jolla.



Enter here for Herringbone



The interior design of Herringbone is beyond what words can explicate.

Taking full advantage of the vintage warehouse structure it occupies, internationally acclaimed designer [Thomas Schoos](#) created a surreal atmosphere that surely pays homage to the ocean and makes patrons feel as if they're in the bustling underbelly of an old wooden ship. Upon entry, a chilled out lounge area is decorated like a waterside patio, featuring a

fireplace, an eve covered bar, and several unique seating areas. In the main dining room, the galley is on full display, as a wall of windows lets hungry 'Herringboners' view the inner workings of the kitchen. Watch Chef Amanda's ponytail sway like a metronome as she coordinates her cooks and assures that each dish goes out to specification. Century old olive trees stretch from the floor and accentuate the out-of-this-world environment that is Herringbone. Add to the ambiance antique row boat light fixtures, an illuminated blowfish chandelier, and a whale skeleton suspended above the dining room's bar, and you really cannot compare Herringbone's decor to anywhere else.

We began with two specialty cocktails from Snake Oil Cocktail Co., each served with a strip spritzed with a varied house made oil extract fragrance which is meant to emphasize the flavors and demonstrate how important sense of smell is to taste. I found the "flavor program" to be fun and unique, and while I didn't love the woodiness in my Old Fashion (11), the musk flavor accompanying the Missouri Mule (11) was a pleasant addition to the Bulleit and ginger beer.

The [food menu](#) is separated into sections of *Cold Fare*, *Hot Fare*, *Greens*, *Crusts*, *Plates*, and *Ands* (sides), and the wine and beer lists are ample. Olives and almonds are presented at the beginning of the meal, compliments of the chef.



We started with the Tuna & Beef, Pistachio & Lemon (12), which was light and flavorful having a complex and layered profile combining the saltiness of paper thin carpaccio slices, sweet and smooth yellowtail, crunchy pistachio pieces, and tangy lemon to create a very visually appealing dish with character and depth.

A staple dish at all of the Malarkey brand restaurants is the Shrimp 'n Grits (13), and Herringbone's version added pancetta, heirloom tomatoes, corn and Humboldt Fog goat cheese. The flavors were on point and we couldn't put our forks down, but the dish was a tad soupy (and the shrimp not fully deveined).



The Maine Diver Scallop (20) was a highlight of the starters: the buttery rich, perfectly cooked scallops melted and the cauliflower puree was a mysterious masterpiece. We still aren't sure if the crumbly bits around the dish was chorizo, almonds, a combination, or what, but it was fantastic. I'd be willing to say best scallops ever...and we seem to try them everywhere!



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We love side dishes, frequently more than the main course, so we went H.A.M. with *And's*. The beets (7) came red and yellow and were emphasized by a spicy marinated feta cheese - perfect if you can handle the heat. The fried brussels were crispy and addicting, presented cornucopia-style and seemingly never ending. The asparagus (7) came super al dente thus retaining texture when mixed with the bursting sunny side up egg, all topped with airy fried potato skins and drizzles of bacon balsamic, making for a very sexy side. The creamed corn (6) may have been my favorite taste of the night, especially when muddled together with the buttery-rich mashed potatoes (6). It made me feel like a little kid! I suggest you get those sides as a pair.



Of the main plates, we chose fish with an order of Day Boat Alaskan Halibut (39) and a Local Harpooned Swordfish (39). The Alaskan halibut was cooked to perfection, delicately flaking apart and mixing nicely with sides of toasted Farro rice, roasted mushroom, Meyer lemon and hazelnuts. The swordfish, always a meaty fish, may have been slightly overcooked, but its garnishes saved the night: the sweet eggplant caponata with raisins, capers and onions popped with flavor, while the

tomato fondue was simple and wonderful and could make for the perfect sauce on any pasta if taken that route.

Although our neighbors' Baked "California" [dessert](#) (11) looked absolutely amazing, we were way too stuffed for that, so our server (who was one of the best waiters ever) suggested a refreshing, palate-cleansing scoop of cherry balsamic ice cream doused in Champagne. It was delicious, and a perfect end to an amazing meal.



Being a multi-million dollar restaurant, of course dishes don't come cheap, but service was impeccable, everything was beautiful, and we genuinely enjoyed our meal. The restaurant was bustling with a vast array of clientele, from the hipster to the senior, and was surprisingly chic, elegant, and relaxed, yet wild and unassuming - unlike any other eatery in San Diego. Herringbone is more than the food or drinks it provides, it is an experience in itself.

HERRINGBONE

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