



# OCEANA'S SENSATIONAL SEAFOOD

By W.A. Muller

Oceana, owned by the Livanos Restaurant Group, once occupied a small townhouse in midtown and has thus moved to an awe-inspiring room close to its original space. In this way, the restaurant can offer outdoor dining or a large bar area where I can attest they make some of the city's best drinks. Known as one of the city's finest seafood establishments, Oceana, has preserved its reputation and continues to serve well-executed, well-conceived and delicious food.

A close friend and I had the joy of recently eating at the restaurant. And I must say that my visit reinforced my already positive connotation of the food, atmosphere and overall experience. We started with the raw bar, having kumamoto and sweetwater oysters and stone crab claw, whose meat was flavorful, sweet and delicate. We then moved on to the caviar cart, with a tasting of Russian golden osetra, which with its brininess, harkened me back to the seaside and of a younger, more carefree time in my life. In worryingly quick succession, due to the speed with which I was eating, we had the marinated oysters with cucumber, apple and toasted spices; the Nantucket Bay scallops served with cucumber, lime and shiso and my favorite of the three, a snapper ceviche that had blood orange, Sicilian pistachio, ancho chili and pickled beets. As you may know, ceviche is a process which allows fish or shellfish to cook in lime juice. Done poorly and the meat is mealy and unpleasant, but done the way Oceana prepared it and it becomes a dish that can enlighten you in the ways of Mexican cooking and certainly bring a smile to one's face. The Sicilian pistachio brought the needed salt component and the chili gave an added layer of heat to the dish.

It was then time to move on to the main courses. We had a rockfish bouillabaisse that was served with bay scallop, Maine shrimp, fennel, Sardinian couscous and olives. It was warm, hearty and soul-satisfying. In addition, we had a crispy wild striped bass. One of the joys of Greek home cooking is the way in which they prepare a whole fish. And being that the Livanos family is Greek, they are exceedingly adept at preparing fish in such a way. I found it to be moist and full of flavor. To balance out the fish we ordered a grilled double cut Colorado lamb chop that was simply prepared but spoke volumes to the care of preparation the restaurant takes in providing quality food to its guests. To join in this procession of deliciousness was a melody of side dishes. We had a potato confit that was heavenly in its creaminess, and sauteed asparagus that were so tender, they almost melted in my mouth.

For dessert we had literally the best doughnut I've ever had. It was devil's food cake with a praline frosting and the filling was a salty caramel custard. It was served alongside a sour pineapple fritter that gave this otherwise decadent dish a touch of sour that was needed to ground it in reality and avoid an instance of extreme richness.

In the end, my guest and I left feeling happy beyond belief. We left with the knowledge that there are few places as exciting and gastronomically rewarding as Oceana. We appreciated the service and the passion which the staff conveyed. If you're looking for fresh seafood in a sophisticated atmosphere, then Oceana is the place to be.

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