



OCEANA:

Queen of the Sea

BY CHRISTOPHER A. PAPE

Every once and a while there is a confluence of timing and events that produces a restaurant so fine – so memorably wonderful that it must be praised; as if to shout from the roof top that one must come – one must dine here to understand what exquisite food must taste like. That restaurant, Oceana, located in bustling midtown and a stone's throw away from Radio City Music Hall is Poseidon's Temple to seafood.

On a blustery night my guest and I made our way to this swank location, full of suspense as to how good the food would be. And let me tell you from the start, that it did not disappoint. Each succulent bite after the other was a culinary revelation – as if Zeus had come from his perch on high to bestow on Oceana everlasting good taste – for everything we had was inspired, creative and delicious.

From the creamy conch chowder which was rich and textured (from the chewy conch) to the sautéed Nantucket Bay scallops (pleasantly plump) with black figs (sensuously sweet) pickled mushrooms and arugula and halibut ceviche (tenaciously tangy) with lotus root, orange, Sicilian pistachio (salty and crunchy) and coconut each dish was thoughtful and pleasing to our refined palates. And this was just the appetizers!

Of course when I eyed the Dover sole on the menu, I pounced. The fish, both delicate and meaty, is a prized catch for chefs seeking to enchant guests. Served simply with olive oil and salt it was perfectly paired with Brussels sprouts with sausage and a sweet and sour glaze. My guest, more inclined to the grilled swordfish had mushrooms as its accompaniment.

A word on Oceana's sommelier – he was not only friendly but one of the most accessible and knowledgeable professionals I have ever met in the restaurant business. He surprised us by pairing our first course with both a glass of champagne and artisanal beer from upstate New York – a perfect match!

The room – large, airy and bright was the ideal setting for such spectacular food. We loved the service which it being a busy evening was attentive without being intrusive and discrete without being distant. Excellent for a business function or a romantic dinner for two, Oceana hits all the notes of a prima donna, without the attitude. Its grace, polish and poise were evident and I insist that you try it for yourself. You'll see what I mean when I say it's a gift from the gods.

