

COMPLIMENTARY | WINTER 2019

LA JOLLA

ABOUT TOWN

Working Dogs
on the Job

San Diego's Best
Urban Wineries

Rugged Norway's
Majestic Beauty

Delicious Appetizers
to Start Off Right

Layering in
Cozy Clothes



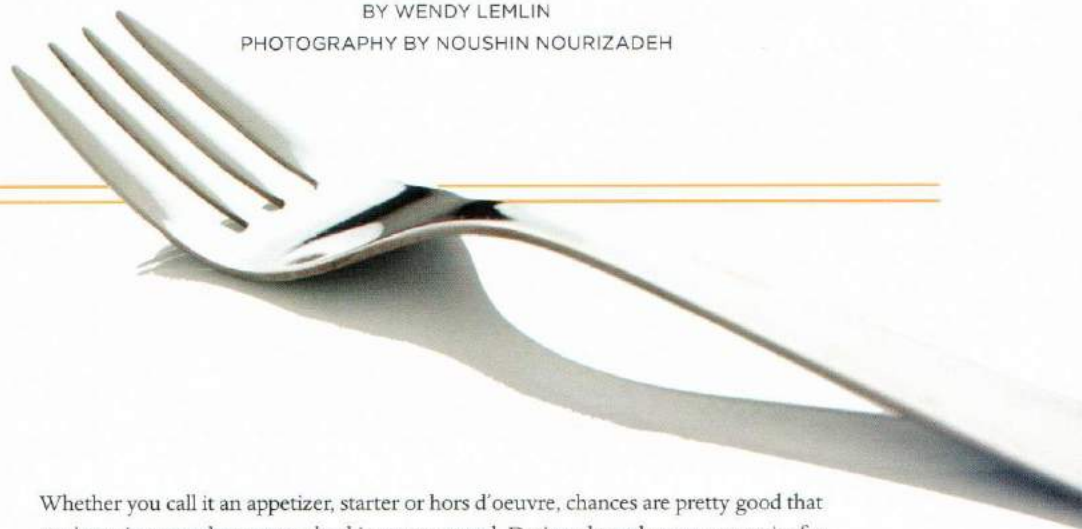
Hamachi Sashimi with Pickled Shiitake
Mushrooms at NINE-TEN Restaurant & Bar

IN THE *Beginning*

Delicious starters set the stage for great dining

BY WENDY LEMLIN

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Whether you call it an appetizer, starter or hors d'oeuvre, chances are pretty good that you're going to order one as a lead-in to your meal. Designed to whet your appetite for the courses that follow, these smaller plates of deliciousness are trending in popularity, especially when shared among tablemates.

"People love appetizers because they are fun, inviting and pack a lot of flavor in a more modest portion," NINE-TEN Restaurant & Bar Executive Chef Jason Knibb opines, citing his Hamachi Sashimi with Pickled Shiitake Mushrooms and Scallion Vinaigrette as a prime example of great taste on a small plate. "We're even finding that diners will often order several starters instead of an entrée, to maximize the variety of palate-enticing flavors. Appetizers and shared plates are definitely a popular option these days, whether as starters or as the full meal."



Iberico Pork Loin + White Beans
at THE MED Oceanview Restaurant

In Italian cuisine, the appetizer course is called antipasto, which means “before the meal.” Fabio Speziati, owner of Osteria Romantica in La Jolla Shores, explains, “Antipasti should be flavorful enough to open the palate, to create anticipation, yet satisfy for its own sake. Our authentic, housemade Crabcake, served with an arugula salad and chopped tomatoes, hits all those marks and provides an excellent start to a seafood-centric meal. For me, personally, I prefer the protein in an appetizer to coordinate with the type of protein in the entrée—like shellfish with fish or charcuterie with meat, but there are no rules, other than to just enjoy!”

According to Alex Emery, THE MED Oceanview Restaurant’s Executive Chef, “The appetizer is a prelude of what is to come; it’s the first chapter in telling the story of the meal. You want to start with something impactful, in terms of both flavor and visual appeal, and that enhances the experience of the courses that follow.” Complementing either a meat or seafood entrée, the Iberico Pork Loin + White Beans features chilled pork, thinly sliced carpaccio-style and paired with an albacore tuna-based tonnato sauce and cannellini beans. Pickled mustard seeds and mustard frill add spicy pizzazz for that gustatory impact.



Opañ Cheek “Meatballs” with Spicy
Tomato Sauce at The Fishery

In contemporary dining, appetizers increasingly are becoming shared plates, with several ordered “for the table,” so that everyone can enjoy a few bites of each. Paul Arias, Executive Chef at The Fishery in Pacific Beach, recommends his Opañ Cheek “Meatballs” with Spicy Tomato Sauce for just such a scenario. “A starter like this is meant for sharing. I often incorporate chili or elements of spice to help get the taste buds working—not overly spicy, but with just the right amount of kick. Also, I find that the lesser-utilized parts of the fish—such as bellies, cheeks and collars—provide an enjoyable level of unexpected flavor or texture.”

“Appetizers serve the dual purpose of exciting the appetite—hence the name—and setting the tone for the entire meal. In fine dining, an appetizer should engage all the senses and serve as an introduction to the artistry of the courses to come,” notes Executive Chef Bernard Guillas of The Marine Room. His Star Anise Oak Wood Smoked Mary’s Duck, inspired by family recipes from his upbringing in Brittany, accomplishes all that. Parsnip puree, kumquat confit, barberry gastrique, branded cherries and Chef Bernard’s *grand-mère*’s honey-spiced bread enhances the succulent duck with visual, flavorful and textural excitement. Served under a dome filled with just enough cherrywood smoke to conjure up a cozy winter night, the showstopper happens when the dome is removed and the enticing aroma engages the sense of smell for full dramatic appreciation.



Star Anise Oak Wood Smoked
Mary's Duck at The Marine Room



Winter Burrata Board at Brockton Villa

At Brockton Villa on La Jolla Cove, Executive Chef Mareya Sisbarro considers the appetizer a very important part of the meal, for all the palate-enticing reasons mentioned above. "I'm also a big fan of putting several appetizers together to make a meal," she points out. "Our Winter Burrata Board gives an outstanding sampling of flavor and textures—toasty sourdough bread, prosciutto, sliced pear, greens, fig chutney and, of course, the super-creamy burrata—and is easily shareable. But, of course, you can pair it with a glass of great wine, maybe add a cup of soup and keep it all for yourself as a light meal that totally wows!"

There's a certain kind of magic in beginnings, and this applies to the fine-dining experience as well. Just as in new love, an impressive starter dish tantalizes and creates a mood of delightful anticipation. Think of it as that delicious first kiss—from your dinner! ✨