

'The magic on the plate'

Nine-Ten restaurant celebrates 20 years in La Jolla



Nine-Ten restaurant opened 20 years ago at the Grande Colonial hotel in La Jolla.

COURTESY OF NINE-TEN

BY ELISABETH FRAUSTO

Nine-Ten is marking 20 years fronting the Grande Colonial hotel at 910 Prospect St. in La Jolla, celebrating not only the restaurant's two decades but also the history within its walls.

Nine-Ten opened July 17, 2001, and is celebrating its anniversary all year. Executive chef Jason Knibb has directed the establishment for 18 of those 20 years.

Nine-Ten "was truly one of San Diego's first farm-to-table restaurants," centered on fresh, locally grown produce, said director of marketing Leslie Araiza.

Two decades later, "we are still a big proponent of that whole farm-to-table movement," Araiza said. "It's definitely part of the fabric of the restaurant."

In statements provided to the *La Jolla Light*, Knibb said "we still try to always cook within the season and use what is available in our own backyard, sourcing local products almost daily from places like Chino Farms and other providers."

Knibb is "out at the farms every day getting the freshest product that he uses to prepare the cuisine for that very night," Araiza said.

"Every plate that comes out of that kitchen, Jason touches in some way, shape or form," Araiza said. "It's in his blood. It's his life. All he wants to do is cook."

Knibb's "craft is the magic on the plate," she said.

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Though the restaurant's menu changes often with the seasons and available ingredients, a few items have remained in demand, such as the hamachi sashimi and Jamaican jerk pork belly, Knibb said. He believes the *cacio e pepe* "may be one of those dishes 10 years from now."

Knibb said many of the restaurant's regular visitors also enjoy the "Mercy of the Chef" tasting menu, which changes daily and enables diners to "experience all the best of what comes out of the kitchen. ... It's a lot of fun and adventurous. You really get to try many more of our culinary creations than if you were to just order off the regular menu."

He added that the restaurant's sommelier, Chris Russo, can arrange wine pairings for the

tasting menu.

Araiza attributes Nine-Ten's longevity to "the La Jolla community, the majority of our customers, our residents who live right here in our ZIP code. These people use us as an extension of their own kitchen. They're here two, three, four days a week."

The restaurant's success "also has a lot to do with the staff," she said. "A lot of servers ... have been here 10-plus years. They've developed these one-on-one personal relationships with the customers."

Knibb said he believes "what truly sets us apart is our consistency. We have remained true to who we are and what we do best since we opened our doors in 2001. That consistency in the food and the service delivery is what brings our guests coming

back multiple times each week."

Nine-Ten is part of a "rich history," Araiza said. The Grande Colonial was established in 1913, and the restaurant site dates to 1928, when it was first La Jolla Drugstore and then Putnam's Pharmacy.

To honor the legacy of Putnam's Pharmacy, its popular ice cream fountain and its pharmacist Gregory Peck — father of the famed actor of the same name — Araiza said Nine-Ten is offering a special cocktail.

The drink, called "Putnam's Remedy," features tequila, dry curacao, prickly pear puree, fresh lime juice and jalapeno.

For more information about the restaurant, visit nine-ten.com.

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Jason Knibb, executive chef at Nine-Ten, regularly visits local farms to choose produce for the day's menu.