



## Destination Dining:

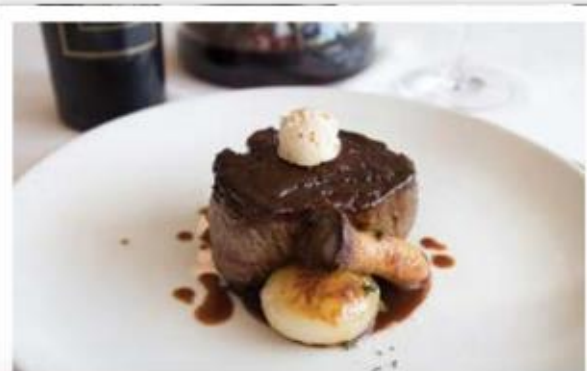
*Selanne*

SELANNE STEAK TAVERN

By Jody Robinson

The Wine Spectator "Best of Award of Excellence" is bestowed upon restaurants that take its commitment to its wine program "a step further," displaying excellent breadth across multiple regions and/or significant depth of top wines, along with superior presentation. As an aspiring oenophile, I learned the above while swimming around online in search of a special "date night" dining destination.

My husband has a deeper knowledge and appreciation for fine wine, so I was determined to find an establishment that would provide the "wow" factor - in its wine selection, culinary offerings, ambiance and service. Housed in a gorgeous, historic 1934 home along the Pacific Coast Highway, Selanne Steak Tavern delivered on all counts.



The award, I learned, is typically given to restaurants that offer upwards of 350 wine selections, and exude a deep commitment to the craft behind a good pairing, or a vintage itself. Selanne Steak Tavern received the honor based on its intensely impressive selection of 2,750-bottle wine list, with origins spanning the planet. Designed to appeal to locals and visitors alike, the cellar boasts flavors from all over our fair state - including California cult wines - as well as other highly rated, world class wines from 435 additional worldwide locales stretching from New Zealand to Spain, Portugal to Peru.

Brick pathways and wooden doors open to an ambiance that successfully transports the spirit of classic American steakhouses and taverns to Southern California's iconic Laguna Beach. With a robust menu of succulent steaks and chops, superb poultry, game and seafood straight from the inspiration of its co-owners: Six-time Olympian Teemu Selanne and local businessman Kevin Pratt, the steakhouse features a comfortable and classic environment for all. Enjoy any of the five distinct dining settings on site: bistro-style Wine Library, the handsome Tavern, outdoor, relaxing Veranda or Sunset Terrace, or the elegant upstairs Loft.

"Food should support the community it comes from and tempt the palate of those around it," and tempt it does. Tender prime meats and Chef Vincent Terusa's favorite farm-to-table ingredients and creative presentations are showcased in a warm, inviting ambiance characterized by wide planked oak floors, a whitewashed fireplace original to the building, and abstract pieces by local Laguna Beach artist Nick Gaetano.



Popular starters include the Pacific Diver Scallops (enhanced with cauliflower and pickled shimeji mushroom) and the Wagyu beef tartare (paired with fingerling chips, wild rocket and quail egg). Although I'm generally more of a seafood aficionado while my husband is the resident meat-and-potato man, I changed my mind three times as I watched as aromatic dishes were delivered to guests around us. I finally settled on the abundantly flavorful grilled-to-perfection ribeye served with Chef's truffle butter and bordelaise. The broccolini (with garlic chili oil/lemon) and butternut squash (maple bourbon tonic/sage) were the ideal accompaniments both in flavor and texture to the melt-in-your-mouth prime meat.



Earlier this fall, Selanne and Pratt opened their latest collaboration: The Penalty Box - a counter service casual eatery - in Garden Grove. "A salute to creative casual food and, of course, hockey," the original, all-American comfort menu cleverly and whimsically refers to Selanne's love of the NHL. PUCKS are burgers made with the eatery's signature blend of sirloin, short rib and wagyu beef; STICKS are four different temptations of hot dogs; WHIPPED ICE are tantalizing ice cream shakes.

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