

MODERN LUXURY

RIVIERA

ORANGE COUNTY



MARGOT ROBBIE

The Wolf of Wall Street's
Foxy Leading Lady

BEST OF O.C. 2014

THE TOP PLACES, SPACES AND FACES

SWEET TALK
WITH BETSY THAGARD

MEET MATCHMAKER
JUSTIN BIRD

FIT AND FAB!
KORY KRANING'S
TRAINING SECRETS

MEAT AND GREET
INSIDE TEEMU SELANNE'S
STEAKHOUSE

PLUS
A PEEK INSIDE ALL THE
FINEST SOIREEES!

PUCKER UP!

TEEMU SELANNE'S NEW LAGUNA BEACH STEAK JOINT SCORES BIG.

By Jamie Gwen
Photography by Andrea Bracco

There's a reason why Anaheim Ducks winger Teemu Selanne is nicknamed the Finnish Flash. He holds the lead record for most goals scored by a rookie, and when he shoots, there's a good chance he'll score—on and off the ice—just like he's done with his new Selanne Steak Tavern in Laguna Beach. No, this new dining establishment isn't a rookie move at all. He and his business partner, Kevin Pratt, have tapped Executive Chef Joshua Severson—formerly of The St. Regis Monarch Beach—to lead the team in the kitchen, and they've transformed the landmark cottage that once housed the legendary French 75 into one of the most beautiful restaurant makeovers I've ever seen.

A lovely outdoor patio sports a Moroccan-feel. And inside, you'll find a crystal chandelier and a wrought iron staircase that leads to a grand loft for fine dining and a second-floor patio with a view of the ocean. There's a huge bar surrounded by a number of tables for two and gorgeous white woods. Sounds alluring, right? It is, and Laguna residents have already made it a hot spot. The evidence: A reservation is now essential.

On my first visit, we're escorted to the front dining room, where the sound is elevated, but the vibe is fabulous—there's a candlelit fireplace, a few high tables, a banquette and a perfect two-top by the window. You might also consider the more discreet and unobtrusive upstairs steakhouse-style seating, where candles make the room glow, and the noise level is minor.



GAME ON From top: The chic dining room; the lobster salad with fingerling potatoes and warm truffle vinaigrette; hot chocolate cake with cayenne-spiced ganache and mini chocolate chip ice cream.



The social set, meanwhile, should choose the tavern and bar area—you'll see and be seen while watching the crowd clamoring for a cocktail and a steak companion. No matter where you end up sitting, the warm bread and biscuits will arrive with quality

European butter, and the game will be off to a fine start. The cocktail list is enticing—I recommend the White Linen made with Hendrick's Gin, St. Germain, lemon, fresh cucumber and a splash of soda. Or try Selanne's favorite, the housemade Moscow Mule. The wine list is made up of mostly flagship vinos. Big-name California vineyards are all represented, along with high-end offerings for the Scarecrow and Screaming Eagle fans.

On to the starters—I suggest the oysters on the half shell, with the chef's ice wine mignonette and seaweed salad kicker. The kumamotos we indulge in are outrageously delectable. On a different occasion, the farmers market soup offering of butternut squash bisque is rich and delicious, garnished with textural toasted hazelnuts—simply sublime. Salad-lovers should start with the wedge, with its crazy good bacon foam and Point Reyes blue cheese. Better yet, treat yourself to the lobster salad. Chunks of freshly poached lobster, tender baby fingerling potatoes and a warm truffle vinaigrette come together to

Landmark Locale

The restaurant dwells in the iconic cottage that formerly housed the legendary French 75 restaurant.

Who Goes There

Laguna denizens, O.C. notables, steak-lovers

You Must Order

The forest mushroom risotto, lobster salad, a steak, and Selanne's mac and cheese

Best Seat in the House

The two-top by the window or a seat at the bar

Duck Décor

Check out the chandelier that hangs in the entrance: Its cascading crystals evoke images of ice rinks.

create a specimen of deliciousness.

Pause for a timeout and consider that the restaurant is still somewhat new. There are plenty of servers on staff, and the kitchen works at a terrific pace, but I do think they're working through a few kinks—mainly the result of being so popular from the very start of the game.

The food is beautifully presented, and you'll be impressed as you move onto the entrees. While you don't necessarily have to eat a cow—you can please your palate with the branzino, masterfully cooked with a crisp skin, sweet petite tomatoes and braised fennel—do not miss out on a prime rib-eye or filet mignon. They're outrageously tender and tasty. I haven't yet tested the Lord Stanley cut, though I've seen it. The 32-ounce Darling Downs is meant for two, and it looked pretty spectacular. The side dishes are all standouts—particularly the mushrooms, seasoned with truffle butter and rich with umami. And you must try the roasted butternut squash or the mac and cheese—it's made with a five-cheese fondue and brioche crumbs. For the vegetarians, the forest mushroom risotto with Parmesan foam is outrageous. Kudos goes to Severson for his skill and significant talent at putting out consistently luscious food.

Finish the game with a playful dessert from the retro-inspired sweets menu. The s'mores are a standout—Pastry Chef Heather Fisher's take on the classic is a molten chocolate cake with toasted marshmallows and graham-cracker ice cream.

And so the puck stops here. Selanne Steak Tavern has it all: the charm of a legendary space; a cool, beachy feel, with a casual option and a more elegant alternative; sensational steaks; sumptuous sides; and a superstar hockey player. Now that's what I call a winning game. **E**

Selanne Steak Tavern

1464 S. Coast Highway, Laguna Beach,
949.715.9881, selannesteaktavern.com

First course: \$8-\$21

Entrees: \$28-\$56

Sides: \$6 to \$12

Desserts: \$6 to \$13

Tue.-Thu. and Sun.: 5-11PM,
Fri.-Sat.: 5PM-midnight

SCORE! Clockwise from top: Executive Chef Joshua Severson and his signature Lord Stanley cut 32-ounce Darling Downs; The Selanne cocktail with Woodford Reserve bourbon; the patio's exotic ambience.

