

MARGOT ROBBIE

ORANGE COUNTY

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 SOIREES!

PUCKER UP!

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

> By Jamie Gwen Photography by Andrea Bricco

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.

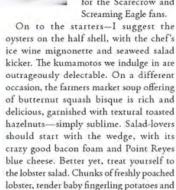
On my first visit, we're escorted to the front dining room, where the sound is elevated, but the vibe is fabulous—there's a candlelit fireplace, a few high tables, a banquette and a perfect two-top by the window. You might also consider the more discreet and unobtrusive upstairs steakhouse-style seating, 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 vinoigrette; hot chocolate cake with cayenne-spiced ganache and mint 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



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. natables, 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 seal at the bar

Duck Decor 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 ribeye 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.

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.





