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Summer 2017



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Selanne Steak Tavern



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Teemu's Room

Selanne Steak Tavern

AMAZING CUISINE, DELICIOUS DRINKS AND A COZY AMBIANCE -
A WINNING COMBINATION

By Andrew Reed

Occupying a cozy cottage nestled amongst the many art galleries scattered across Laguna Beach, you'll find a fine dining experience that beckons with a siren song of fresh ingredients and top-shelf steaks. Selanne Steak Tavern is the result of a partnership between Teemu Selanne, aka the Finnish Flash, and friend Kevin Pratt, a local businessman. Selanne is best known for excellence on the ice as an NHL Hall of Famer, multiple Olympic medalist, and overall hockey god. One of his most notable achievements was spearheading the amazing run that captured the Stanley Cup for the Anaheim Ducks in 2007. After years of considering the idea of starting a restaurant, Selanne and Pratt opened the doors to Selanne Steak Tavern in the latter part of 2013. No surprise that Teemu won out for the naming rights!

Taking over the former location of French 75, Selanne Steak Tavern has the feel of an opulent beach cottage while capturing an air of seaside casual. The designers did an excellent job of maintaining the original 1930s ambience while adding some fun updates that complement the unassuming elegance. There is a dedicated bar area with a beautiful oak and marble bar and a dizzying array of elixirs on display, including rare bourbons and Scotches. The restaurant utilizes both the upstairs and downstairs for dining, with varying sizes of rooms.

Since the place is full of nooks and crannies, you can easily get the sense that you're in a 20- or 30-seat restaurant, not a 130-seat one. Tables are also well spaced, which made our dining experience feel intimate and private. At the same time, the large window near our table gave us plenty of natural light and allowed us to do a little people-watching as passersby strolled down PCH. There are two patios: one upstairs and one on the ground level, both cooled by the ocean breezes from across the street.

Executive Chef Joshua Severson has created a steak-heavy menu, as expected, but also provides top-notch seafood, poultry, and game, as well as uber-fresh vegetables, to create an array of dishes to satisfy any palate. While not as uncommon as in the past, it is nice to know that the restaurant supports local farms and fisheries, focusing on freshness and flavor while maintaining a keen eye on sustainability and natural raising and growing processes. Chef Severson has been guiding the kitchen since the beginning, and brings plenty of street cred with stints at venues like the St. Regis and the Four Seasons on his resume.

We began our dining experience with a couple of cocktails, made old-school and utilizing the giant ice cubes that show they mean business. You'll find some classics, such as an Old Fashioned, a Sazerac, and a Negroni. My mezcal cocktail, the Mezzmerized, which featured a sprig of flamed rosemary, was delicious! There is a very credible draft beer list, featuring several notable craft options. But the showcase beverage is most certainly wine. Awarded "Best of Award of Excellence" by Wine Spectator in 2017 after an "Award of Excellence" in 2016, Selanne Steak Tavern makes sure that your meal can be paired with the perfect wine. Featuring wines from across California, including a good number of Napa cult offerings, the list also includes a range of other outstanding wines from around the world. Several outstanding wines are also offered by the glass, including some heavy hitters that one seldom sees unless diving in for an entire bottle.

A warm loaf of pull-apart bread arrived to get the food courses going, and we were off and running. The Pacific sea scallops were amazing, followed by a nip of some of the freshest pea soup that I have ever tried. A wedge salad also exuded freshness, while the other salad that arrived featured beet "ravioli." Thin slices of fresh beet surrounded a goat cheese and hazelnut filling. This approach was unique in my dining experience, and thoroughly delicious.

The main courses featured the ribeye for me and the filet for my dining companion. All the beef is certified Angus, prime, or Wagyu quality, and each steak is served with a bordelaise sauce and seasoned marrow butter. We also ordered the peppercorn sauce, which is one of several that are available a la carte to accompany your chosen cut of beef. Side dishes are also a la carte and feature some recommended standouts, such as sautéed mushrooms and Selanne's Mac and Cheese — a five-cheese fondue with a brioche crumb topping. The seasonal vegetable offering was local white corn, served off the cob, which exhibited the same freshness as everything else we had enjoyed in the previous courses.

We did sample one dessert, which featured a rich ice cream with a crispy coconut wafer of some sort. Sometimes you don't even need to know everything that is in a dessert in order to enjoy it; that was the case in this scenario. I am determined, however, to return to try the banana cinnamon monkey bread, which somehow eluded me on this particular visit. I accompanied the dessert with



Wine Room with Fireplace

a dram of Selanne Reserve barrel-aged maple caramel bourbon, and the staff was nice enough to share a taste of Selanne's signature blend limoncello, which would serve as a wonderful nightcap had I not jumped on the bourbon. All in all, our experience was a real standout. Attentive yet unobtrusive service, together with the ambience, the freshness of the ingredients, and combinations of rich and sumptuous flavors, makes Selanne Steak Tavern



Cheese & Charcuterie



Prawns

a worthwhile splurge. A display featuring a smaller-scale replica of the Stanley Cup and some of Selanne's Olympic medals serve as a reminder that, just as in his amazing exploits on the ice, his restaurant is committed to excellence in all phases of its execution, with a team effort that delivers an amazing experience.

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