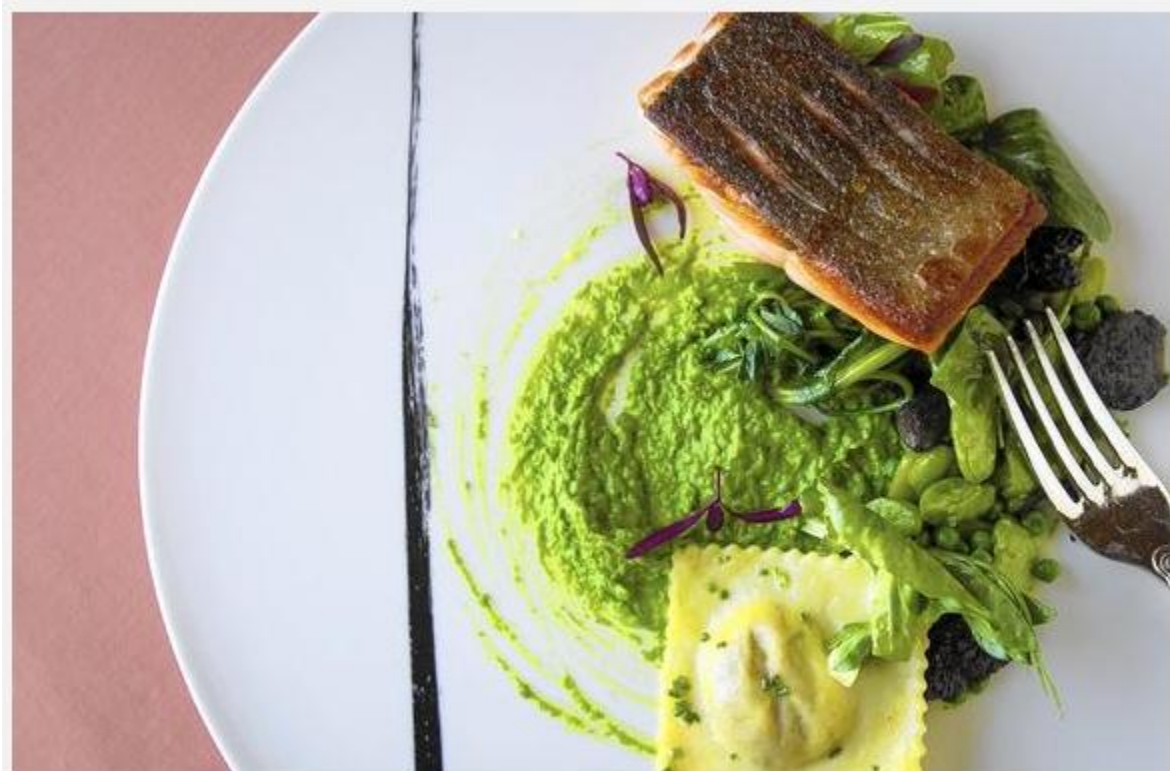


The Gossiping Gourmet: Andrea at Pelican Hill scores with food, ambience



The seared wild salmon with English pea purée, Oregon mushroom and escargot ravioli at the Andrea Resort at Pelican Hill. (SCOTT SMELTZER, Daily Pilot / June 30, 2015)

By Terry Markowitz

July 2, 2015

The resort at Pelican Hill is, in a word, gorgeous. The readers of Conde Nast Traveller rated it the world's top golf course in 2012. Sitting on a hill overlooking the ocean, diners at the high-end restaurant, Andrea, have the choice of eating in the lovely dining room or on the patio just outside.

My companion and I dined there on the night of the summer solstice when it was still light at 8 p.m. We had a leisurely cocktail and sat on the terrace while waiting for our table. Watching the sun slowly setting over the lush green expanse of the golf course and out to the ocean was just a perfect way to begin an evening.

Since it was getting cool, we decided to dine inside. Chef Marco Cristuolo presents the cuisine of northern Italy. He makes fresh pasta daily and features Southern California's finest locally grown ingredients.

The main dining room has big windows on three sides. The ceiling is very high, giving it a spacious feel. All around the area are real palm trees, and among the prettiest of the many lighting elements are the table lamps in the booths.

Our waiter brought us a basket of mixed breads with a small dish of butter and another of whipped ricotta cheese scattered with pine nuts.

Whenever I see foie gras on a menu, I simply cannot pass it up. It was served as an appetizer that included the beautifully seared foie and a rolled duck breast, accompanied by white polenta mushroom foam and strawberries made into a compote.

The plate was topped off with a long, thin slice of crisp bread. The dish was quite good except that the duck was a bit too salty. The presentation was pretty, and I can say the same about the rest of the dishes we ordered.

The appetizers are quite generous, and two would make a meal.

Our other selection was half of a shelled, poached Maine lobster served with a salad of mixed lettuce, spring radishes, tiny red peppers, green olives, and red and yellow endive dressed with a fennel emulsion. The lobster was very good, but the fennel emulsion was almost indiscernible.

I am fussy about salmon because it is often too fishy for me, but the wild salmon at Andrea was great. It tasted fresh and had a lovely seared crust. It was served with tiny green peas, lima beans, two kinds of mushrooms and delicious escargot raviolo.

My dining companion ordered the braised veal cheeks, another winner. The cheeks were incredibly tender and rested in a very rich meat sauce. Complementing them were romanesco mashed potatoes, Oregon mushrooms, micro carrots and porcini jus.

Guests who have trouble deciding on dessert can order the sample platter, which is an especially beautiful presentation of four small desserts. The warm caramelized chocolate cake with lush dark chocolate was irresistible. Tiramisu sprinkled with bits of hazel nuts rested on a square of chocolate. An orange and ricotta tart was served with lemon thyme mascarpone gelato and lime "caviar." The fourth selection was gelato, the flavor of the diner's choice. We went for the chocolate sorbet.

If that wasn't enough, our meal was topped off with a platter of petit fours: a chocolate box with white chocolate and raspberry filling, two little pistachio cakes, macaroons with a lemon center and a cookie.

I must confess that we often take home doggy bags, and this meal was no exception. I would suggest finishing or starting your dining experience here with a long walk around the lovely buildings and the grounds.

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ANDREA

LOCATION: The Resort at Pelican Hill, 22701 Pelican Hill Road, Newport Beach

HOURS: Noon to 2:30 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays; 5:30 to 10 p.m. nightly

PRICES:

Appetizers: \$18 to \$26

Pasta: \$24 to \$30

Entrees: \$35 to \$68

Desserts: \$13 to \$24

WINE:

Bottles: \$40 to \$14,625

By the glass: \$10 to \$32

Corkage: \$30

INFORMATION: (949) 467-6800



(SCOTT SMELTZER, Daily Pilot / June 30, 2015)

The main dining room at the Andrea Resort at Pelican Hill.