

# diary of a MAD HUNGRY WOMAN

This blog is a food journal, my eating adventures mostly in and around Orange County, CA, but stretches to Los Angeles, San Diego and beyond. I am constantly searching for delicious food to eat and nothing is out of bounds, although sometimes it doesn't always end well, nevertheless, it is always an interesting journey

## Starting OC Restaurant Week with a bang!

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A friend of mine's birthday falls right around [Orange County Restaurant Week](#), so every year, whenever it came time to celebrate, we have always chosen a restaurant participating in this event. Two years ago, we celebrated at [The Ranch Restaurant & Saloon](#), which had only been opened a few months at the time of Restaurant Week. I am usually left the task of choosing a restaurant and that year, The Ranch Restaurant & Saloon's menu stood out more so than any of the others. Needless to say, if you've been reading my posts on a regular basis, you will know that it has quickly become one of my favorite restaurants in Orange County.

This year, I wanted to start Restaurant Week off right, so I made reservations well ahead of time and gathered some friends together, many who have never experienced The Ranch Restaurant & Saloon before, to eat what is positively one of the best meals this county has to offer.



Another thing I want to stress is The Ranch Restaurant & Saloon is one of the few restaurants which offers up full-sized *a la carte* portions of each dish on the Restaurant Week menu so you're getting a three-course meal like you would if you were a regular diner at the restaurant. Your dining experience will be exactly the same except for the extremely reasonable \$40 price tag. In this post, I will be featuring the entire restaurant week menu for you.

Starting with appetizers, **Honeycrisp Apple & Endive Salad** is a light starter which packs a punch when it comes to flavor. Every component on this plate comes together to form a complete mouthful of perfection. From the saltiness of the St. Agur Blue Cheese, the hint of bitterness from the endive, to the sweetness of the candied walnuts and, the tartness of the cranberry vinaigrette, everything is precisely balanced on the palate.



**Thai Coconut Curry Bisque** was so rich and creamy that everyone at the table sang high praises for it. Its wonderful aromas was on the subtle side — I would have liked a heavier scent of lemongrass and kaffir lime, but it was so silky on the tongue I quickly forgot about it especially, when I found those little bits of North Carolina shrimp in my mouth like hidden treasure. Sublime!



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I've had the **Hand Crafted Asparagus Cavatelli** before and took a taste from my friend's plate, it was just as good as I remembered. The perfectly *al dente* house-made cavatelli are so delicious with spears of asparagus and balls of home made pork sausage seasoned with Calabrian chili. The little kick of spice you get at the end is such a delight, and I highly recommend this for all pasta lovers.



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On to entrees and I was happy there was at least one each of everything represented at our table. **Chipotle & Sun-Dried Cherry Braised Beef Short Rib** is not my choice ever because I'm not a huge fan of short rib. Having said that, its hearty California Pinot Noir reduction was rich and decadent and the accompanying white cheddar grits, butternut squash and Brussels sprouts *accoutrements* were ideal sides for this very robust dish. My red meat loving friends enjoyed it very much.



**Maplewood Smoked California Sablefish** was another entree choice and if you're not familiar with this particular fish, it is pretty much black cod or butterfish. It is an extremely oily fish and some might find it a little too unctuous on the palate. This was beautifully smoked and reminded me of the smoked sablefish from [Russ and Daughters](#) in New York City. Sweet potatoes, King trumpet mushrooms, country ham and cauliflower velouté are well-paired with the dish.



However, what I came here for was the **Confit of Muscovy Duck Leg**, which I first sampled two years ago during Restaurant Week 2012. Crispy on the outside and tender on the inside, I wish Chef Michael Rossi would put this on the regular menu so I can come at any time to enjoy this. Beluga lentils with a salty-sweet home made guanciale, cavolo nero (Tuscan black kale) and baby root vegetables combine together for a delightful plate.



Executive Pastry Chef David Rossi has prepared three desserts for you to choose from. **Strawberry Cheesecake** with a macadamia nut crust and served with a quenelle of mango sorbet was a huge hit. The cheesecake was light and airy making it easy to consume even after a hefty entree.



Most of the table ordered **Meyer Lemon Creme Brulee**, and the ladies were enchanted by the baby blueberry madeleines garnish.



However, I think everyone was extremely intrigued by the **Milky Way With a Twist** which was a deconstructed Milky Way bar with Valrhona chocolate, malted nougat discs and quenelles of salted caramel ice cream.



So there you have it. As always my advice is, if you only go to ONE restaurant, The Ranch is the one to go to. It is always the best of everything here from service to quality of food, and you will never here leave still hungry during Restaurant Week!!

***The Ranch Restaurant & Saloon***

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