

Seafire Grillhouse and Bar wastes no time in becoming a premier Southcoast destination

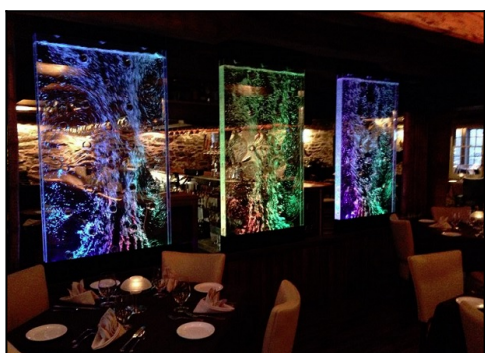


My Seafood Delight: "Littlenecks, Mussels, Scallops, Shrimp and Lump Crab Meat in White Cream Sauce, Marinara Sauce or White Wine Sauce Over Fresh Linguini."

I won't beat around the bush. I won't lead you on a vague trail of allusions keeping you guessing as you read. I'll be transparent as possible and state that last night I had one of the best meals in my life.

I'm a bonafide, passionate foodie. I'm willing to admit that I may even be a food curmudgeon. I'm getting a bit of "cranky, old man" syndrome as I get older. In this day and age, it seems you pay a modest amount to dine out and often it's a disappointing one. The food is delicious, but the service is dismal. The service is friendly, but the salad is wilted and the portions small. How many of you have eaten out and received a bill, only to be overcome with diner's remorse?

I'm apprehensive these days when I dine at a new place, my shoulders tense up. My back slumps. I'm already anticipating the diner's remorse. Well...that's a bit of exaggeration, but my expectations are typically set low, so the let down isn't from so high. In fact, I have had so much poor, processed seafood that you need to twist my arm to order it. I need multiple confirmations from "experts" that the seafood is unprocessed and fresh. Who wants to pay \$20+ to bite into a flavorless, sterile saltball? If I want that, I'll go to the beach and pretend to drown...for FREE.



A stunning water feature is just one element of Seafire's elegant decor.

Arrival, Ambiance, Atmosphere

My brother and I arrived on a Wednesday evening figuring there would only be a small to moderate crowd. Parking in a parking lot downtown feels odd. Seafire Grill one of the last prime real estate parking spots in the city. That's nice. Nothing worse than starting out an evening with the frustration of finding available parking.

Walking into Seafire and turning towards the entrance is a genuine treat. What a gorgeous facility. Owner Greg Kulpinski exposed much of the building's old character knowing full well it would set the ideal ambiance and atmosphere. Being a history buff, I simply adore seeing interior stone walls and exposed timber ceilings. It's New Bedford after all!

After the doors open, you are immediately in the dining room. There is a hosting platform to the left and a rectangular island bar that seats approximately 20 people to the right – with about 8-9 people enjoying themselves. We were immediately greeted by the exuberant bartender and within a few seconds restaurant manager Adam pleasantly greeted and sat us. Total waiting time? About 8 seconds. About a dozen gorgeous, ebony wood tables impeccably set (they won “Best Table at the **Taste of Southcoast in 2014**) filled the primary dining area which was also decorated with a fabulous water feature and some stunning art.

While we had this area to ourselves, the adjacent patio area was filled. It was elegant, gorgeous and had us considering a move to it. Loud, hunger pangs kept us practical. In addition, to the regular menu book, you receive a cocktail menu and a wine list (and champagne) all bound in hardcover.



Atmosphere, ambiance done right without being pretentious!

Very light music – on this night it was 80s music which I enjoyed being class of '88 – filled the room. Perfectly piped volume so as to not force anyone to have to compete it with it to have conversation, but amplified enough to set the atmosphere.

Service and Appetizers

Our server Taylor came within a minute to take a drink order. I ordered a Pinot Noir and Mike stuck with water since he didn't spot his stand-by, Chianti by the glass, on the wine list. Only took him 4 minutes to change his mind and order a Pinot Noir though!

Taylor returned with the wine and some spectacular bread rolls. These round balls of joy were accompanied with a small ramakin of what appeared to be homemade butter. Off to great start. Poring over the menu, I was delighted to see some originality. Clearly a significant amount of care went into crafting the menu. This wasn't a menu that was 6 pages with an 200 choices. It was a modest menu that declares "We know what we do...what we excel at. We're sticking to it." A menu that has just the right amount of items on it is a key to success. Day in, day out, night after night creating a menu of this size translates into consistency and excellence.

A number of appetizers jumped out at us. Portuguese or Rhode Island Style Calamari, Crab Cakes, Coconut Crusted Shrimp, Lobster Ravioli, Mussels and an unusual Crunchy Ahi Tuna Tacos which are described as "Pan-Seared Tuna, Sesame Seeds with Cucumber, Fresh Wasabi Aioli and Sriracha." I love Sriracha. In addition to French Onion Soup and Clam Chowder, Seafire has their own signature Lobster Bisque: "Traditional Topped with a Lobster Crostini and Lobster Butter."

A wide variety of salads are offered. In addition to House and Ceasar salads, there is an Asian Soba Noodles Salad of "Fresh Vegetables and Sesame Dressing Topped with Fried Wontons with the option of adding Teriyaki (Salmon, Chicken or Shrimp) or Sesame Ahi Tuna. A Wedge salad, Caprese, Gorgonzola and Spinach Pear Salad.



*You need this antipasto
in your life!*

It was difficult to choose an appetizer, but we settled on the Littlenecks “White Wine, Onions, Garlic, Olive Oil and Marinara Sauce or Portuguese Sauce.” (\$10.99). We opted for the Portuguese sauce. While Taylor put the order in, we dug deeper into the menu. It was clear that Seafire Grill chose “Surf and Turf” as their specialty.

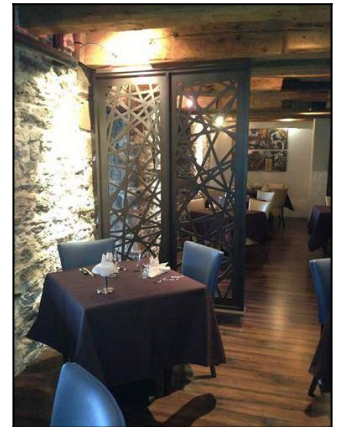
The opening act

The Littlenecks arrived – a dozen little treasures piled upon one another. The aroma was magnificent. The taste was grander. These were the freshest, most tender littlenecks I’ve ever had lightly tossed with cooked onion slices and topped with two crostini. Cooked perfectly. *Perfect*. The white wine sauce was a successful marriage of wine, garlic and the proper amount of saltiness. These poor things had no chance. I considered the merit of explaining to Mike that since I had 50lbs on him, I should get 7 or or 8 of them and he should get 4 or 5. It would have only been fair. I could honestly sit at the bar and make 4-5 orders of these, stabbing any greedy hand with my fork.

Everything to this point had instilled a confidence in me that it was going to be a *good* night. This is the entire point of going out to dine with friend or family. A restaurant is supposed to be interdependent to your company and conversation. The atmosphere is their to energize and push the dialogue. The introduction of dishes intermittently is to

compliment and pace the chat. A synergy of give and take to provide a positive experience. Seafire nails it. My brother and I could relax – just “let go” and enjoy ourselves.

Being the churlish lot that I am, when Taylor returned to clear the plates I asked her if it would be in bad form to lick the plate. She replied “Do you want me to hold the plate for you?” I wish she wasn’t kidding. Bravo, Taylor.



*Exposed stone,
antique timbers
and a modern
setting.*

Choosing Mains

We again pored over the menu and there was quite a selection: Blackened Mahi Mahi, Cajun Rare Seared Ahi Tuna (Steamed Rice, Wakame Salad, Wasabi, Stuffed Salmon or Grand Marnier Salmon (With Raspberry *Beurre Blanc* Over Spinach and Potato of the Day, Pickled Ginger and Soy Sauce). A Lazyman’s Lobster, Risottos, Sole and even Fish And Chips. There were pasta dishes, and a fabulous “Steak and Chops” section.

Kobe Beef Burger, 8oz Filet Mignon Gorgonzola Butter and Port Wine Sauce, Filet Mognon, Prime Rib, Chicken Mushroom Marsala and Asian Ribs with Hoison Glaze “Served with Soba Noodles and Grilled Vegetable Stir-Fry.” In case, you wanted the best of both worlds there is an option to make your own Surf & Turf Combo.

I ended up choosing the **Seafood Delight** which was a medley of “Littlenecks, Mussels, Scallops, Shrimp and Lump Crab Meat in White Cream Sauce, Marinara Sauce or White Wine Sauce Over Fresh Linguini.” (\$22.99) I chose the white cream sauce. Mike chose the New York Sirloin “Topped with a Bourbon Butter Served with Roasted Garlic Mashed Potato and Grilled Vegetable.” (\$19.99).

The grand performance

A few moments later, she arrived with our mains. The mingling aromas of steak and seafood were maddening. I was full absorbed in the artwork in front of me. The first thing I noticed was the heaping pile of fresh picked crab meat dead center of the plate. Apparently I was stunned because I said out loud “Is that real crabmeat?!” There must have been a mistake! I grabbed my fork and brutishly stabbed at the strings and chunks. Yes, it was the genuine article. My brother and Taylor vanished. The world dissolved into an unimportant backdrop.



Seared scallops fresh from the Seafire's own boats – over crab and chorizo cakes!

I snapped to and realized there were other items! A dozen, small tender mussels ringed a bed of *al dente* linguini gently dressed in a light, not salty, flavorful white wine cream sauce. Sweet, medium shrimp – I have to say unprocessed and FRESH. My biggest pet peeve is processed seafood and processed shrimp makes me see red. Same goes for the scallops – 20/30

count, slightly sweet medallions of delight. And of course, more of those delectable littlenecks. This was seafood done with respect. Put on a pedestal like it rightfully deserves. No surprise here as Seafire owns two boats epitomizing the from boat to plate concept. They aren't tampering with a good thing.

The subtle touch was the sizes of the seafood. People love seafood, but not necessarily gargantuan mussels and clams. Massive bellied clams aren't something most people are particularly fond of. Seafire, unlike many places, clearly feels that in addition to freshness being a priority, so isn't hand picking the proper size. It's this extra care and attention to detail that is a common theme at Seafire Grill.

Here was a dish that made me feel guilty. It was so good that I felt like I was doing something wrong. There had to be a catch. Things this good don't just happen to me. Someone must have slipped something into my drink. I eyed my brother, Adam and Taylor suspiciously.

Mike's New York Sirloin (medium well) was a gorgeous thing to look at. Simmering juices and the perfect amount of char accompanied with bright colored, fresh vegetables and a side of chopped, seasoned potatoes. Contrasting my aforementioned churlish and greedy ways, my brother sliced a portion of his steak and offered it to me.



The patio – one of three seating areas plus the rectangular

island bar.

I had a Seinfeld-ian moment: knowing the rules of engagement, he knew I would have to return the offer and allow him a go at my seafood. Does he think I'm an amateur? Why is he looking directly at the scallops? I mean, he can have some linguini if he wants.

My first bite into the steak flooded me with memories of the old **York Steak House** – only this was better. York was great, but this was light years ahead. Here I am having one of the best seafood dishes in my life, and now I am tasting one of the best steaks *ever*? 80s music is playing overhead. In my head, Joey Lawrence let out a “Whoa.”

Grand finale or *coup de grace*

Often in American dining, quality is often sacrificed for portions. It's not always a bad thing – in some cases it's a good thing – but it renders dessert superfluous. The beauty of qualitative, perfect portions is I had a tiny corner of my stomach requesting to be filled. For the first time in a long time, dessert was a possibility. Taylor detailed the half dozen dessert options and we settled on the interesting sounding Chocolate Bag – filled with white chocolate mousse and raspberries and blackberries.

When it arrived, we were a bit puzzled on how to approach it. Do we slice into it? Scoop it out, waiting for the chocolate to soften before eating? So like the rubes we are, we began smacking the chocolate with our spoons. Real sophisticates we are! After scooping a few blueberries, blackberries and strawberries out and devouring them, I noticed they weren't sweetened.



*The glorious
"Chocolate Bag"!*

Here was another theme threaded throughout the Seafire experience: don't oversalt and oversweeten the ingredients. Let the quality and freshness of the ingredients combine with the chef's ability stand on its own. It's an insult to add copious amounts of salt and sugar to ingredients. In my opinion, it's what poor chefs hide behind.

Anyhow, underneath the delightful fruit was handmade sorbet. Wonderful crimson chunks of slightly sweet, citrus-infused deliciousness. Mixing these with a few cracked shells of superior chocolate played for a complex symphony on the tongue. An absolutely divine dessert and a wonderful way to cap off the night.

Conclusion and summation

I should mention that our server Taylor was superlative. Light conversation, attentive to detail, and magically appearing when needed. Distant but always available. That's how I like my servers. Her delightful attitude and presence was the perfect compliment to a perfect night of dining.

With Seafire Grill I found a place that I intend to frequent regularly. Throughout the day, I wondered what some of the other items on the menu were like. The bar is my type of bar and since I didn't experience it that night, I'd like to return and give it a go. A night on the town for me, is a

sitting at a bar drinking wine and having great conversation with good company and the atmosphere there is just right.

The pricing of the menu is spot on for what you are getting. Yes, some people wouldn't be able to afford it on a regular basis, but they would certainly make Seafire their destination for a special night, like an anniversary, birthday, or work promotion. Having said that, Seafire is not a pretentious, arrogant high-end restaurant.



*Asian Short Ribs
– Served with
Soba Noodles and
Grilled
Vegetable Stir-
Fry.*

It is highly approachable. A menu designed with care, a world class chef, competent management, and affable servers are a clear recipe for success. Once word-of-mouth gets out, I fully expect Seafire Grill to be a spot that you will need a week out to get a reservation. It's quite simply a spectacular dining experience and one that I'd like to revisit again and again.

There are a lot of similarities between Seafire Grill, Cork and the Pasta House. In terms of detail, care, and excellence they are all siblings. The menus are distinctly different, but these are three of the finest dining establishments in the

region. They retain that “upscale” dining service, but without being pretentious.

Seafire Grill has an active Facebook (where they give away free meals!) and website where you can check on [specials](#), [make reservations right online](#), and browse their [menu](#). There is even a [calendar](#), so you can keep abreast of live music, DJ and Dancing or “Make your own hamburger” nights.

You can call for reservations, however walk-ins are welcome. Got a group or want take-out? No problem. Want to have a special event there? You’re in good hands. They accept Visa, Mastercard, and of course, cash.

The Seafire Grill is on the map. They have fired a shot across the bow of all the South Coast’s restaurants with the standard they’ve set here. It’s a must have dining experience.

And yes, no brothers were harmed in this dining experience. I did not stab Mike’s hand with a fork and I returned his generous offer to sample from my plate.

Or did I?

Seafire Grillhouse and Bar

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Tue – Thu: 11:30 am – 10:00 pm

Fri: 11:30 am – 11:00 pm

Sat: 3:30 pm – 11:00 pm

Sun: 11:30 am – 9:00 pm

Facebook: www.facebook.com/SeaFireNB

Website: seafiregrillhouseandbar.com/

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