

SPECTACULAR DINING

Sea Salt Restaurant

By Margaret Word Burnside and Aaron R. Fodiman
Photography by Noraa

When Chef Fabrizio Aielli and his wife Ingrid decided to open a St. Petersburg outpost to join their supersensational restaurants in Naples, they chose the second floor of the Sundial for a 12,000-square-foot seafood-oriented establishment. Stylishly designed with a giant seafood display on ice at the entrance and a wine tower that can hold 7,000 bottles, it has become one of Tampa Bay's most venerable dining spots. With a large outdoor patio and trendy seating and spacious and gracious design elements everywhere, you immediately are prepared to indulge yourself in fabulous dining.

Menus are similar for lunch and dinner, although lunch offers an additional variety of sandwiches and smaller entrées. Whichever you choose, be sure to stop and look at their fisherman's display case, where you can choose your own fish to be baked whole, filleted tableside and served with citrus *beurre blanc* sauce.

Since they always have a selection of



This black grouper was served with green bamboo rice, barbecued hearts of palm, papaya and golden raisin salsa.

oysters and platters of assorted seafood that range from oysters to Maine lobster tails, choosing what to order at Sea Salt will be your only problem. To start, you may want the Beef Carpaccio, Diver Scallop Crudo, or Baked Oysters Rockefeller. Whatever you choose will convince you that at Sea Salt, only the best natural ingredients are used. Most fish is served either simply grilled *a la plancha*, or in accordance with the chef's presentation.

There are several pastas, steaks and items such as Wagyu Beef Short Ribs, Niman Ranch Pork Chop and free range chicken, in addition to a pan seared tofu steak with

a red pepper glacé that will make you realize you could become a vegetarian.

The side items, such as brussels sprouts with maple and bacon, or sautéed mixed wild mushrooms, are not to be missed. You can enhance any dish with grilled shrimp, crab cake, diver scallops or a grilled half Maine Lobster Tail. Or order a topping of Béarnaise sauce, Sauce *Au Poivre*, Gorgonzola Crust or our favorite, a Truffle Demi-Glace.

The desserts are decadent. Items such as their chocolate dome or berries in sauce will make the perfect ending to an excellent meal.

As they have for us, the extensive wine list, choice of salts, bread baskets and other small, but important touches are bound to make this one of your favorite restaurants. ■■■

EDITOR'S NOTE: Sea Salt Restaurant is located at 183 Second Ave. N. in St. Petersburg on the second floor of the Sundial entertainment complex, (727) 873-7964.