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FOOD

BY TODD SOUTH



Land Ocean's Jumbo Lump Crab Cakes come with cayenne aioli and a side salad.
PHOTO/ALLISON YOUNG

Shore thing

Land Ocean is a family-owned sister restaurant to a pair of locations in north-central California. Presented as a “new American grill,” it features steaks, burgers, seafood, salads and other items in a tastefully decorated space. Service is impeccable, though booths are the most common seating option. Reservations are definitely recommended for larger groups.

For starters, a large artichoke was split and grilled (\$13), served with lemon-basil remoulade. The dip was OK, and the ’choke was tender enough. It was a bit overpriced compared against the tenderloin wellingtons (\$13)—four puff pastry cups filled with brandy peppercorn sauce, bearnaise and bits of beef. They’re not at all like actual beef wellington—more akin to saucy yorkshire pudding—but enjoyable nonetheless.

Three jumbo lump crab cakes (\$14.50) were drizzled in cayenne aioli and served with a side salad. The tasty large cakes were minced meat and filler, no lump meat to be found. There was good flavor with the sauce, and the greens were fresh. More impressive was a bowl of spicy garlic mussels (\$13) swimming with sliced serrano chile, topped with slices of grilled baguette. The mussels were tender and full of flavor, the crisped bread great when dipped in the goo.

A pair of six-ounce, perfectly cooked lobster tails (\$45) were served with broccolini, herb butter and coconut jasmine rice. Even if you’re not big on coconut, you’ll enjoy the subtle pleasure of this rice. I felt the veg was a bit tough and undercooked, but my dining companion said it’s just the way she likes it.

One of my friend’s thin-sliced, sesame seared ahi tuna salad (\$19) with mixed greens, apple, almond, pickled ginger, mango, snap pea and wasabi vinaigrette was on the money. Similarly, a serving of spice crusted ahi tuna (\$25) with sauteed spinach, garlic black rice, roasted corn salsa and avocado mango puree had no flaws. The meat was sliced

thicker, and the flavorful rice had the right amount of chew for its type.

I tried the wood-fired rotisserie chicken (\$21) served with grilled asparagus, mashed potatoes and chicken jus. A monster pile of chunky mashed potatoes and deliciously gelatinous gravy supported a huge half chicken. The asparagus was perfect, and the moist-not-mushy poultry was probably the best rotisserie effort you could ask for.

A filet of blackened salmon (\$25) with sauteed spinach, cilantro rice, chipotle mango sauce and pineapple salsa was fine, if not what I’d define as “blackened.” The salmon was flaky, but the overall flavor was more citrus than Cajun. Rice and spinach were adequate. The surf and turf was better (\$29), an eight-ounce teriyaki wagyu top sirloin steak aside three tempura prawns in coconut sauce, with a side of mashed potatoes. The well-charred, flavorful steak was ordered medium rare, with just a touch of pink. The large shrimp were plump and crispy; the sauce was interesting enough.

From the kids’ menu, the 10 year-old in our party chose mac and cheese and fries (\$7)—spiral cavatappi pasta in fancy cheese sauce with plenty of shredded parmesan-reggiano. She didn’t love the upscale pasta, but the crispy, fluffy fries were a hit, only outdone by the included ice cream sundae dessert. Perhaps the most kid-friendly move I’ve seen in an upscale, casual restaurant.

We shared a serving of chocolate lava cake (\$10), with chocolate ganache, vanilla bean ice cream, crushed almond toffee, chocolate and caramel sauce. It gushed satisfyingly all over the plate, a dramatic end to an enjoyable meal. □

Land Ocean

13967 S. Virginia St., 993-2499

Land Ocean is open Monday to Thursday from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., Friday from 11 a.m. to 10:30 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Learn more at landoceanrestaurants.com/reno.