

February 8, 2013

First Taste: Jack London Square's Lungomare serves up good food 'along the sea' (Preview)

Published on Friday, February 08, 2013

Last updated on 12:48AM, Friday, February 8, 2013



Lungomare's Ravioli with red kuri squash, amaretti cookie, ricotta, brown butter, sage, kale, and almonds

When a friend asked if my husband and I wanted to be her guests at a preview dinner at [Lungomare](#), the new Italian restaurant at Jack London Square, I first said, "I'm in!"

Then, I immediately went to look up the meaning of the name.

I had heard a bit of buzz about the place from my friend (who works with some of the people attached to the restaurant and [Chop Bar](#)), but I wasn't sure just what or who a "Lungomare" was. Northern Italian dishes, with some concentration on seafood, pizza and pasta in the old Miss Pearl's Jam House space at 1 Broadway, sounded intriguing.

"*Lungomare*" is an Italian word that means "waterfront" or "along the sea." And if Tuesday's preview was any indication, folks visiting the waterfront in Jack London Square have a delicious new spot to enjoy.

While writing an in-depth review of a place on their first night out of the gate is not something I normally would do (or read, really), I do want to share a few highlights of the "peek" we got to sneak.

The spot

The restaurant and bar are both warm and comfortable. The space has always had a few unusual-to-me angles and odd proportions with extra wide aisles and tall ceilings.

Lungomare's designers have done a great job with their build out and design so the space feels a little better organized than its predecessor. Walking to the right from the corner entrance, you pass the bar, which has plenty of room for waiting and drinking. Folks who were early for their seating or hoping to get in were enjoying cocktails like the "That's Amaro!" - a mix of rum, pineapple and amaro that I thought was sweet, but balanced and enjoyably interesting.

The patio is substantial with table seating, heaters and a waterfront view to the left and a comfortable extension of the lounge with sofas and chairs to the right. The large walkway to the left of the host stand that leads to the main dining area used to dwarf the handful of tables there. The designers, who just finished getting everything in place shortly before the event, have solved this by placing elevated tables with tall chairs in the space.

What used to feel like being placed unceremoniously in a section that was both isolated and too spacious, now feels like a natural transition area between the bar and the rest of the dining room.

The food

There were three of us in our party: our friend who has worked in restaurants for many years, my husband and I. We each ordered a different *primi*, *secondi* and dessert.

Though I was expecting a "tastes good for the first night" experience, we

had something quite different. Our food came out at the right temperature and most dishes were either very good or excellent. Here are the highlights: For the first dish, Monterey squid, served with borlotti beans and salsa verde was a group favorite. The squid was perfectly cooked just the right amount of give. I had never tasted [borlotti beans](#), but they were earthy, rich and lightly seasoned. The salsa verde was not what I expected having spent much more time eating Mexican food than Northern Italian. Think parsley, vinegar, capers and mint more than tomatillos, jalapeños and cilantro. We all scraped the plate clean.

For the second dish, we shared an order of ravioli. The filling is made with [kuri squash](#), amaretti cookie and ricotta cheese and is served tossed in a brown butter sage sauce. Lightly sautéed kale and almonds topped it off. The squash filling was slightly sweet and bright orange-red. I can imagine several variations on this dish based on the season and working through various squashes. Brown butter makes everything taste wonderful.

Among the entrées we shared, the rotisserie chicken with fregola sarda and baby beets was a hit. I suppose most of us who eat chicken have had rotisserie chicken quite a few times. For me, it's still one of those dishes that, when well prepared, is soothing and relaxing. This version was warm with a crisp skin and moist and flavorful meat. The fregola sarda (think toasty pearls of coarse semolina), which was toasty and nutty, soaked up the juices from the chicken and the accompanying beets.

We shared a few desserts including a delicious mini apple tart with a caramel sauce that tasted like it was made with a dark bourbon. The portion was about four nice-sized bites, which was plenty, five if you consider the dollop of whipped cream served on the side.

We were expecting a bit of a chaotic and uneven meal given that it was a preview, but what we were presented with was a warm, friendly and well-run restaurant with solid food.

If You Go

Lungomare

<http://oaklandlocal.com/article/first-taste-jack-london-squares-lungomare-serves-good-food-along-sea-preview>