

Cultural Daily

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The Belvedere Restaurant: An Affair to Remember

Steve Gottfried · Wednesday, January 22nd, 2020

If you're looking for the perfect venue to host a VIP-level special occasion, the AAA rated Five-Diamond Belvedere restaurant situated in the Peninsula Hotel should be on your short list. Besides being located in one of the most elegant hotels in Los Angeles, the cuisine is first rate and the service impeccable. Prior to my reservation, the only association I had with Belvedere was the sitcom *Mr. Belvedere* that aired from 1985 to 1990. But to my surprise, I learned that the restaurant was named as an homage to the hotelier's childhood memories of a scenic lookout near Mont-Pèlerin Switzerland.

Such was the impetus behind my decision to take my 93-year-young mom for a birthday luncheon she would not soon forget. Gifts are fine, but a destination meal – done right – is something that stays with you long after the final course. From the moment you enter the hotel lobby, you're greeted by a spectacular floral arrangement fit for the Versailles. A leisurely stroll around the hotel was enough to work up an appetite after a substantial drive. We were seated in the elegantly appointed Belvedere dining room in a comfortable quilt-cushioned booth. The wait staff were extremely personable and accommodating. A bottle of Evian, and an assortment of wafer-thin crispy lavash and warm pumpkin bread and we were ready to place our orders.

For starters, I had the Mediterranean Chickpea Salad which is a vegan feast of kale, quinoa, avocado, Persian cucumber, Kalamata olives, and of course the fiber-rich protein powerhouse, the chickpea, aka the garbanzo bean. The portion size was more than generous and was ample enough to serve as lunch the following day. For the main course, I had the Big Glory Bay Salmon, sustainably farmed in New Zealand and BAP (best aquaculture practices) certified. The salmon lived up to its pristine pedigree with mouth-watering goodness, served on top of a puree of celeriac (celery root), with sunchokes tossed in Mediterranean salsa verde. My mom ordered the Chicken Oregano soup which boasted a generous portion of organic chicken breast in a savory bowl of white beans and Swiss chard. For the main course, my mom went off-grid because she wanted boneless chicken breast prepared in accordance with her low-sodium diet. We were both impressed with how accommodating they were on short notice, delivering a beautifully prepared boneless chicken breast entrée served in a Mauviel copper roasting pan on a bed of pomme puree (mashed potatoes) and steamed parsnips.



Faberge-Inspired chocolate egg is almost too beautiful to eat.

The ambience, the service and the food were all top-notch. It wasn't busy but that was just fine with us, preferring a quiet relaxing meal and having the wait staff all to ourselves. The pleasant

sunlit dining area features an impressive collection of paintings by renowned artists from around the world, including Fabienne Verdier, Alex Katz and Tsuyoshi Maekawa, among others. And in case you missed the gorgeous floral arrangements in the lobby, there were additional arrangements being refreshed at the entrance to the Belvedere. For dessert, they surprised the birthday girl with a chocolate Fabergé-inspired egg filled with apple cake, liqueur gelée, chopped apple with cinnamon sugar, walnut streusel and whipped cream. I abstained, but my mother gave it her clean-plate seal of approval. We left, feeling completely pampered, fully satiated, and armed with take-out containers of leftovers. Mission accompli.

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