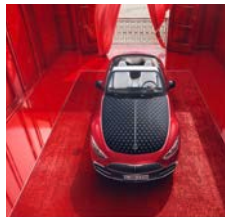
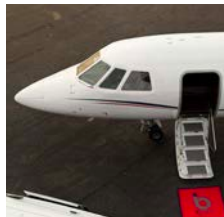


UPSCALE *Living*

SEPT/OCT 2024

FAST MACHINES



EXPERIENCE THE DIFFERENCE
www.upscalelivingmag.com



DECKED OUT TO DINE AT ACQUERELLO IN SAN FRANCISCO

| BY TRACY ELLEN BEARD



Dinner at Acquerello, a two-star Michelin restaurant and a Wine Spectator Grand Award winner from 2012 to 2023, is not just a meal; it's an exclusive event. Nestled in the prestigious San Francisco Nob Hill neighborhood, Acquerello has been a bastion of upscale gourmet classic and contemporary Italian cuisine and fine wines for over 30 years. Owned and operated by Giancarlo Paterlini and Executive Chef Suzette Gresham, the restaurant offers three distinct dining options: a Seasonal Tasting Menu, a Tasting of Vegetables, and a Prix Fixe Menu, each promising a unique and unforgettable experience.

Executive Chef Suzette Gresham

Although Chef Suzette has all the credibility imaginable for a Michelin-star chef, when it comes to publicity, she tends to fly under the radar. Her long-term career began when it was uncommon for women to lead in restaurant kitchens. Through perseverance, culinary excellence, and thick skin, Chef Suzette has made a name for herself in her hometown of San Francisco and in the culinary arena.

Wines at Acquerello

Rich in Italian wines, primarily ones from Piemonte, the staff at Acquerello has spent over 25 years developing the restaurant's extensive wine list. In addition to Italian wines, the list includes a wide selection of the best wines from California and Champagne. Although the list is already comprehensive, the owners at Acquerello are always in search of new and exciting wines to add to their collection.

Ordering a bottle of wine to complement dinner is a fabulous idea. However, giving the sommelier the freedom to pair different wines with one of their tasting menus is the best way to experience unique and tasty wines from the restaurant's collection.

Dinner at Acquerello

During a recent trip to San Francisco, my husband Steve and I had the privilege of experiencing the Seasonal Tasting Menu paired with wines at Acquerello. The evening was made even more special by the dedicated team at Acquerello. Franco, one of the original Maitre ds, Head Sommelier Rafael Santos, and Executive Chef Gresham, all took the time to present and describe each wine and dish, enhancing our culinary journey. The stylish and elegantly decorated restaurant added to the divine culinary experience, making us feel truly appreciated as guests.

The nine-course Seasonal Tasting Menu with two additional options was exquisite. We began the dinner with the chef's surprises for the evening and a glass of Grosjean, Vino Spumante di Qualita Metodo Classico Blanc Noir Extra Brut' Mas du Jario' NV. This delicious glass of Brut, made using the traditional champagne method Metedo Classico, was produced near the Alps. The bubbles showcased heavy citrus notes that paired deliciously with the trio of amuse-bouches: Crispy Potato Cannoli filled with a Parmesan mousse with pearls of truffle on top and a sprinkling of gold, warm and savory Financier Cakes stuffed with caramelized onion, and a piece of Comté cheese on the top and then dusted with



chive powder and finished with alyssum flowers and pickled mushroom. The third and final treat was Porcini Bashirs, which is a little puff pastry filled with porcini cream, Parmesan, and black trumpet mushroom powder. My favorite was the cannolo, boasting a strong Parmesan flavor, creamy on the inside, and a terrific crunch from the cannolo.

The first official course, Spanish Mackerel Crudo, presented with confit Buddha's hand inside the pickled radish salad dressed in yuzu and finger lime, exhibited a nicely balanced array of textures. The dish delivered a wonderful crunch from the veggies, notes of acidity from the yuzu, and a fresh and clean taste from the sea from the mackerel. This course paired perfectly with the Köfererhof, Alto Adige Valle Isarco Sylvaner 'R' 2021 from Italy. I found that the wine offered soft floral notes reminiscent of rose petals. It was medium-balanced, not too acidic, and brought out the sweetness of the mackerel. The wine was light and refreshing but had some weight and texture.

Steve and I opted for the supplemental dish of Royal Kaluga Caviar with a bavaresa (Bavarian cream) of smoked eel along with little eel segments, a fried potato nest, and pickled beet, paired with Alois, Pallagrello Bianco. The caviar was spectacular; it was my favorite course of the night. Chef Suzette enjoys serving caviar in unique and ingenious ways. The richness and smokiness of the bavaresa contrasted fabulously with the salty, briny caviar, and the relatively unknown heritage grape Pallagrello Bianco has a tiny bit of smokiness and texture with a saline finish to magically pair with the caviar.

All the courses were exceptional, but I am a harsh grader. The caviar received a score of ten in my book, and so did the Ridged Pasta with Faux "Foie Gras," with black truffle and Marsala served with a Maculan, Breganze 'Torcolato' 2020, which is a dessert wine. This 30+-year-old dish is the chef's signature pasta dish, and the wine choice has been the pasta's partner for over 20 years. This pairing is



the quintessential Acquerello experience that brings people back year after year. Movie buffs will understand my reference when I say that this combination is a “When Harry Met Sally” moment, as a low moan follows each bite.

I could have stopped and been entirely content after the pasta dish. Still, we pressed on and continued by enjoying the Wild Texas Venison loin served over crispy leaves of cabbage set atop a cabbage puree and layers of portobello mushrooms and salsify, along with numerous sweet treats that capped off our decadent Italian dinner.

Acquerello continues to be one of San Francisco’s top dining establishments. After 30 years and two Michelin stars, local and visiting diners delight in the restaurant’s elegant ambiance and Chef Suzette’s classic and innovative cuisine. Put on your finest clothing and savor an outstanding dinner paired with delicious wine in the chic and classy atmosphere at Acquerello. ❖

