

Oceanique Re-launches with New 25th Anniversary Look and Menu

Written by Australian Business

CHICAGO, IL, September 18, 2013 **/24-7PressRelease/** -- For 25 years, Oceanique Restaurant in Evanston, Illinois (505 Main St., Evanston IL; 847-864-3435) has been quietly and steadily amazing a large, loyal following of food and wine enthusiasts by offering one of the best fine dining experiences in the Chicago area. Those in Chicago's culinary circles know that owner, Chef Mark Grosz, is one of Chicago's finest. But this quiet and intimate restaurant, which has been content to be a highly successful best kept secret in the North Shore, has decided to celebrate its 25th anniversary by telling Chicagoans its story with a little more Chicago-style bravado.

The timing couldn't be better. Oceanique has just undergone a complete re-design, from ceiling to floor and everything in between. Gone are the traditional country French furnishings and fixtures with their soulful, homey countenance. In their place is a light, airy, stylish and contemporary new look. There are fewer tables than before, making room for comfortable banquettes. Tables, chairs, table settings and lighting all form a new and cohesive atmosphere that brings out the beauty of Grosz's food while adding even more comfort and style to the Oceanique experience. Guests also may notice that Oceanique has actually reduced the number of seats in the restaurant to make it more comfortable and roomy.

Oceanique's new look is more contemporary, lighter and airier," says Wine Director Philippe Andre. "We've created a brighter and more dramatic ambiance with new lighting that makes our tables-and Mark's amazing food-almost glow. But we haven't lost any of the intimacy and casual congeniality that has been our trademark since the beginning. In addition, we've have added some new dining options including a brand new small plates menu for the bar area."

Over the years, this North Shore dining destination has quietly garnered a steady stream of acclaim as one of the area's best restaurants. Since 1993, Oceanique has been ranked as the number one seafood restaurant in the Chicago metropolitan area by the prestigious Zagat Guide. Oceanique's wine program is also world class, and attracts wine aficionados from throughout the Chicago area. Every year since 1994, Oceanique has earned Wine Spectator Magazine's "Best of" Award of Excellence. The magazine has declared the wine list as one of the world's 750 best.

Longtime regular customers are pleased that Grosz's approach to the seasonal cuisine has remained basically the same, yet Grosz is confident that new customers will find the experience to be very contemporary. "Our food has always evolved, never staying the same," says Grosz. "The evolution of my culinary style stems from my travels around the world, where I've experienced wonderful dishes from a wide range of cuisines. When Oceanique started, it was primarily a contemporary French restaurant. But over the years, our food has become much more international. We have always used the finest local ingredients and that certainly won't change. We also love to draw upon on the interplay of fresh herbs to create interesting flavors

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and textures-that also won't change. But in today's menu, you'll find more ingredients that are global in nature; we particular like to draw upon Asian ingredients."

Oceanique has introduced a new small plates-focused menu for the bar area to satisfy the cravings of Oceanique's guests who wish to opt for a lighter, more casual meal, the restaurant has introduced a new Bar Menu, which features shareable small plates that can serve as accompaniments to the wine, beer and cocktails or can be combined to form a delicious, value-priced light meal.

"The bar menu features shareable small plates to satisfy guests who aren't in the mood for a full, multi-course dinner," says Grosz's wife and partner Renee Andre. "We want to encourage people to stop by even on those days when they don't want the full multi-course treatment. They can have a wonderful glass of wine, artisan cocktail or craft beer to accompany an informal snack or meal in a care-free atmosphere. In the dining room we will still serve our à la carte menu and our tasting menus, with great wine pairings from our distinctive wine program, led by our son, Philippe."

The bar menu includes such dishes as the Market Ceviche (photo, above left), with yuzu and pickled asparagus (\$7); the signature Lobster Sandwich with Togarashi saffron aioli and served on brioche (\$7); Maine Pemaquid Oysters with Pernod, spinach, Parmesan (\$3 each; photo, right) and Zucchini Blossom Tempura with manchego, tomatillo and shrimp (\$7). Guests also can nibble on Oceanique's unique Mixed "Bag of Tricks" Nuts (\$5) or savor the Italian Robiola Cheese with plum mostarda, watercress and pickled fennel (\$5). Those who would like to stop in for an indulgent dessert paired with a glass of wine or coffee will enjoy the perfectly prepared Valhrona Chocolate Souffle with lemon balm ice cream (\$17).

Specialty cocktails are also given great attention for the benefit of Oceanique's bar guests. Among the in-house creations are the Litchi Royale, made with N.V. Duval-Leroy Brut Rose Champagne & Litchi Sorbet (\$20); the Cucumber Martini, made with Hendrick's Scottish Gin, Cucumber, Fresh Sage & Combi (\$16); the Açaí Gimlet, made with VeeV Açaí Spirit, Citadelle Gin, Lime & Basil (\$17); and the Saint Germain, made with St-Germain Elderflower Liqueur, Champagne & Soda (\$20).

Dinner Menu

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The dinner menu begins with a selection of Plats Froid (cold plates), including Wild Maine Day Boat Scallop Sashimi, with watercress, peach and yuzu (\$20) and Chilled Maine Pemaquid Oysters with choice of jalapeno-red onion salsa and seaweed salad or rainbow trout caviar (\$20) or lemon crème fraîche (\$23). The Lightly Smoked Salmon is accompanied by radishes, cucumber, horseradish crème fraîche and casa nostra toast (\$16). Other cold plate choices include Chicken Liver Mousse with "pickles", Madeira gelee, quail egg, manchego and poilâne toast & brioche toast (\$14), and American Sturgeon Osetra Caviar with traditional garnishes (\$65).

Foie Gras with borderPlats Chaud (hot plates) include Hudson Valley Foie Gras with rhubarb-pineapple chutney, caramelized pineapple and fennel (\$24); Wild Maine Day Boat Scallops with cilantro kimchi lobster-soy broth, (\$20); Roasted Maine Pemaquid Oysters with elote, purple cauliflower and saffron (\$20); and Butternut Squash Ravioli with fennel, prosciutto, crispy sage and walnuts (\$14).

Salades et Potage (salads and soups) are refreshing and delicious. Choices include Wild Maine Lobster & Bufala Mozzarella, caviar and avocado (\$22); Calamari Shrimp with daikon radish, candied ginger & lemon and sake (\$14); Michigan Corn Soup with leeks, corn and Maine lobster (\$15) and Local Beets and Warm Goat Cheese, with artichoke, pecans, organic lettuces and sherry vinaigrette (\$14).

Fruit de Mer (fish and seafood) entrees include Wild Alaskan Halibut with purple cauliflower, fennel, yellow beans and Porto (\$40); Wild Delaware Skate with favas, purple potatoes, tropea onion and lemongrass (\$38). Additional dishes include Bouillabaisse Oceanique with skate, halibut, salmon, shrimp, scallop, mussels and squid (\$35) and Wild Maine Lobster with local beets, red onion, basil potato and yuzu-saffron (\$44).

Viandes et Volailles (meats and poultry) selections are Nebraska Prime Filet Mignon with escargot, purple potatoes, seasonal mushrooms, and cippolini (\$47), and Hudson Valley Duck Confit, with foie gras, Belgian endive, spaetzle and black currants (\$42).

Guests who prefer a vegetarian entree will enjoy the Eggplant, Heirloom Carrots & Tomatoes with seasonal mushrooms, tropea onion, and leek-basil broth (\$23).

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Beautifully presented desserts from the pâtisserie tray

The finale to every meal at Oceanique is the pastry tray presentation, featuring an array of luscious and tempting specialties, all priced at \$12. Among the choices are Warm Cherry Claufouti Tarte with cherry ice cream; Day & Night Cake with chocolate mousse, whipped crème chantilly, chocolate cake and chocolate ice cream; Warm Raspberry-Blueberry Tarte (photo, below left) with blueberry ice cream; and Valhrona Chocolate-Caramel Pot de Crème with creamy chocolate custard and candied hazelnuts.

Chef's Seven Course Degustation Menu

Oceanique's seven-course tasting menu has been a magnet for food and wine aficionados on the North Shore and beyond, and the Summer Degustation Menu (\$105 per person; \$170 with wine pairings) continues the tradition of presenting a magnificent generous sampling of Chef Grosz's favorite dishes.

The degustation begins with Wild Maine Lobster with caviar, bufala mozzarella and avocado. The second course continues the meal with Wild Maine Diver Sea Scallops in a kimchi lobster-soy broth. The third course is a tasty delight, Butternut Squash Ravioli with walnuts, prosciutto and crispy sage. The fourth course features Wild Icelandic Cod with seasonal mushrooms, bacon and turnip. After a seasonal sorbet intermezzo, the sixth course consists of Hudson Valley Duck with foie gras spaetzle, Belgian endive and black currants. The final course is a presentation of Pastries from Pastry Chef Abel Garcia.

Updated wine program

Oceanique's wine program is more front and center than ever before. Wine Director Andre has updated his pairings to reflect the sway of the seasons. Oceanique offers three levels of wine pairings (\$65, \$99 or \$199 per person). There is an excellent selection of wines by the glass and the wine list is so extensive that it offers something for every taste, food offering and budget. Guests find the wine service at Oceanique to be very knowledgeable, yet refreshingly gracious and down to earth.

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"Over the years, our wine program has become more than an addition to the Oceanique experience but rather, a beautiful companion to our fine cuisine," says Wine Director Andre. "Our wine cellar contains a wide spectrum of varietal offerings with an outstanding collection of rare Champagne, Burgundy and Bordeaux. Oceanique's cellar not only holds some 700 labels (between 8,000 and 9,000 bottles) at a precise 57° and 64% humidity, it strives to offer something special for every dish, every person, and every occasion."

About Oceanique

Oceanique, celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2014 (February 5, 2014), is one of Chicago area's finest and most acclaimed restaurants, serving contemporary French-American cuisine in a beautiful, new dining room. The restaurant is owned by Chef Mark Grosz and his wife, Renee Andre. The Pastry Chef is Abel Garcia and the Wine Director is Philippe Andre. The bar area has been expanded and features a new small plates menu to accompany the fine selection of wines, craft beers and artisan cocktails. Guests are encouraged to enjoy a casual meal in the bar area or enjoy the full à la carte and degustation menus in the dining room. The bar even includes a communal table to encourage single dining or groups.

Oceanique serves dinner from 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m., Monday-Thursday and from 5:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. on Friday and Saturday. The restaurant is closed on Sundays. Valet parking is available and all major cards are accepted. A private room is available for group events. For more information or to make reservations, please contact Oceanique at 847-864-3435 or visit the website at <http://www.oceanique.com>.