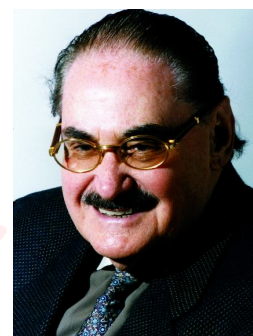


Dining Out

With Sheldon Landwehr
On Vacation



If compelled to designate the best know restaurant in Palm Beach, you would more than likely choose the landmark American bistro Ta-boo, deeply rooted on posh Worth Avenue for the past six decades.

Aside from unwavering patronage, implications of wealth, and social standing, Ta-boo's reputation is primarily founded on food that may not always ravish the palate, but is unequivocally rewarding nonetheless. While it's axiomatic in this business that notability is largely accomplished by the kitchen, it so happens present-day proprietor, bon vivant and raconteur Franklyn de Marco, is intensely proud of profits scrape together from the oversized savvy, elbow to elbow bar and lounge, which possibly moves more booze than nourishment in the five chic dining arenas combined.

Ta-boo's daily feeding and drinking frenzy, with nightly dancing from 10:30 PM, at times makes the place impenetrable, meaning impossible to get in. In truth, Ta-boo is almost always occupied with regulars. Most tables are reserved and bar space is in pressing demand by a faithful clientele, old friends and acquaintances, so Ta-boo seldom has space for outsiders. Succinctly put, Ta-boo simply draws a remarkable throng of socialites, celebrities, prestigious professionals and so forth.

Between the five fashionable dining rooms (Fireplace Room, Gazebo, Courtyard, Bistro Room and Terrace) it's an educated guess that the "Garden Rooms" and warm inviting Fireplace Room, are the most in demand. Seating comfortably accommodates 150 patrons. At peak dining hours, be it lunch, dinner, or supper, these 150 seats are almost always fully packed not merely once but two and three times.

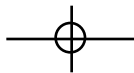
One might think with such a gush of society it would be unrealistic to expect singularly appealing culinary delectations supported by efficient service, but you would be wrong.

To begin with, the raw materials of gastronomy that arrive fresh daily into Ta-boo's kitchen are stringently top quality. The choicest worldwide delicacies available, inevitably find their way here, mainly flown in direct to Ta-boo, giving the place a wide sweep of choices ranging from wantonly expensive, fussy and complex preparations of Russian Beluga caviar to an array of drop-dead classic gourmet pizzas turned out with solid American respect and pizzazz.



Francis Turk (Asst Chef) Franklyn De Marco (Owner) Nancy Simmons (Owner)
Richard Whitaker (Day Manager) Marc Mariacher (General Manager) Polo Mojarro (Chef)

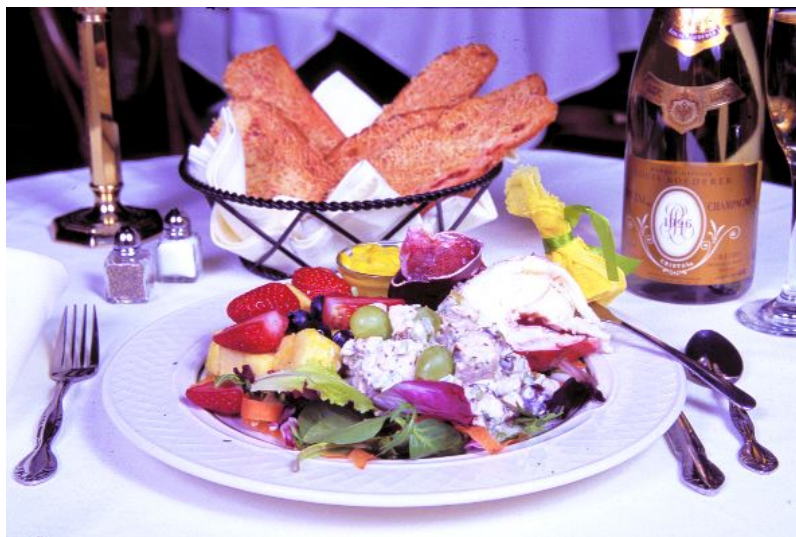




Whole Dover Sole Meunier with Chassagne Montrachet wine



Pan Seared Chilean Sea Bass with Chalk Hill Chardonnay



Lobster & Chicken Salad with Louis Roederer Cristal



Roasted Mahogany Duck with Cardinale Napa & Alexander Valley wine



The long and tempting list of specials reveals some of the best work this restaurant has to offer. At lunch one afternoon, boneless duck salad was exceptional, the perfectly cooked moist meat nicely complimented by a light dressing. Other special offerings of an outstanding nature included ultra-rare seared tuna, and Dover sole sensibly seasoned.

Appetizers assuredly worth mentioning: meltingly tender, delicately breaded fried calamari, accompanied by orange aioli and a fiery dip, and big, fat, pristinely clean mussels, a regular menu offering whose daily preparation changes at the whim of the chef.

As for Ta-boo's stone crab specialty--the fussy groundwork makes for great theatre--but the crustacean is inadequately broken up, excessively cold, and somewhat watery.

Soups and chili play a major role, as well as main course salads such as the mix of Maine lobster and chicken, or gossamer thin yellow-fin tuna carpaccio ideally seared, marinated and encrusted in sparkling golden seeds of sesame. Other innovative offerings embrace goat cheese stuffed eggplant, grilled portobello burger, and grilled boneless chicken cutlet cleverly garnished with the freshest arugula.

On the dinner menu, well-marbled Black Angus, slowly dry aged beef like roast prime rib, sirloin and filet mignon have been as carefully culled as they are prepared. Rounding out the menu are hefty cuts of veal and varied grilled shrimp and chicken novelties.

Choices from the pastry chef include apple crisp, chocolate mousse, fudge brownie, Florida key lime pie, fresh fruit fondue, coffee cake and the like.

Co-owner Nancy Simmons has recently undertaken a total renovation of the restaurant as well as addressing many of the newer aspects of the menu with their long time chef Apolonio Mojarro. Pianist Don Scherzi entertains nightly with popular American classic melodies.

In sum, it seems Ta-boo has mastered the four phases of every accomplished restaurant: procurement, preparation, service and decorative design; and has achieved the kind of success which places it in the very front rank among the restaurants of Palm Beach.

*** Ta-boo, 221 Worth Avenue, Palm Beach, Florida. (561) 835-3500. Lunch and dinner daily. Sunday brunch. Dinner entrees \$11.50 to \$29.50. Reservations strongly recommended. Accepts major credit cards.

Photos by Paulette & Amy Martin

