



Prime Cut Cafe & Wine Bar Opens in Orange; Wang Tcheng Does Chinese, Korean in Anaheim

By Fifi Chao

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(Orange, CA – January 12, 2009) This column shares a sad date with New York's famed Rainbow Room Grill perched atop Rockefeller Center and renowned for its fabulous views of Manhattan.

It closed Jan. 12. It is reported that the economy and a lease renewal in the millions of dollars played a part. We're looking at losing a legend dating back to 1934. If there's a bit of good news, it is that the bar and banquet facilities will remain.

The Cipriani Group—owners of 11 famed restaurants worldwide—took over operation of the Rainbow Room Grill in 1998 and continued the long legacy of the Rockefeller family in hosting the biggest celebrity names, the most astute intellectuals and a cadre of world leaders and newsmakers.

Restaurant Week

The third annual Newport Beach Restaurant Week is set to take place Sunday until Jan. 22. About 75 restaurants will participate in the great culinary delights served as three-course meals. Lunches will be offered at \$15 or \$20 and dinners at \$20 or \$35, depending on the restaurant.

This is your chance to try a lot of fine dining—I know of some people who do lunch and dinner every day during Restaurant Week.

Participating restaurants sell out quickly for these extraordinary bargains, so the trick is to make your reservations early.

Prime Cut Cafe & Wine Bar: restaurant is upscale but comfortable. To see a list of the restaurants and their phone numbers, go to www.Newport-BeachDining.com and click on Restaurant Week and then click on participating restaurants.

Restaurant Opening

It takes a lot of fortitude for anyone to open a restaurant now, much less as an independent.

But from early reports (I have these culinary spies that report in, you know), I understand Prime Cut Cafe & Wine Bar in Orange is a winner right out of the gate.

Proprietor and Newport Coast resident Mo Iqbal is a passionate foodie with more than 30 years of experience in the corporate side of the restaurant industry.

I must make my own reservation this week to experience what's been described to me as an upscale but completely comfortable restaurant with a busy wine bar. It's good that this part of the county is getting another alternative dining venue.

The concept has been in development for four years. Consulting chef Kelly Mullarney, working with Iqbal, created a menu inspired by comfort cuisine presented in a contemporary style.

Their concept includes attention to quality in food and service. Fun dishes like cheese fondue, old-fashioned deviled eggs, house smoked salmon and herb-crusted, slow roasted prime rib encourage my appetite.

I've also heard that the French "jelly" doughnuts and the individual French press coffee are reason alone to make a stop.

The wine bar offers tastes, flights and pours by the glass. Very reasonable prices speak of value and have created lots of up front buzz.

Executive chef Ronnie Arnold is a South County veteran, having worked at the Montage Resort & Spa, the Ritz-Carlton Laguna Niguel and St. Regis Monarch Beach.

The restaurant serves lunch and dinner daily. It's at 1547 W. Katella Ave. (at Stadium Promenade close to Honda Center) in Orange, (714) 532-4300. The Web site is primecutcafe.com.

Asian in Anaheim

Anaheim, too, has a rather new restaurant where you're going to find impressive food and ambiance.

Wang Tcheng will delight those who enjoy excellent Asian cuisine. It is a place where I am remembering everything—the food, service and utter attractiveness—long after I've had a meal there. I am having no trouble in thinking about going back again and again.

The restaurant sits in a freestanding building in a shopping center. The outside is quite neat and the modern metal grid surfacing the front of the building sets the tone for the contemporary interior, which could fit any cuisine since it is sleek and chic and has nothing whatsoever to do with the themes of old that we expect in places serving Asian food.

In addition to such an inviting dining room, the modern flavor of the bar and lounge and the banquet rooms is striking. The two private rooms are sophisticated in looks and fine for private personal parties, but their modern audio-visual equipment and other electronic amenities also make them ideal for business gatherings.

The menu features many dishes of both Chinese and Korean origin. Let me just lead you to a few that we've really liked.

Try the pan-fried pork and vegetable dumplings (about as good as they get), the steamed dumplings filled with shrimp and vegetables and the sizzling rice soup (wonderful) as first course dishes.

Since some of the Korean dishes are not on the menu, please ask the owner and host, Penny Wang, or your server about them after first giving a hint about what kinds of meat, seafood or poultry you like.

They'll gladly suggest great tasting dishes built around those items. Incidentally, Penny's husband is the talented chef. They owned Lucky Pearl in Anaheim Hills for several years, so you may already have had their food in some fashion.

I can highly recommend the noodle dish called cha chiang mein on this menu (you might recognize it as tsa-chiang mein in other Chinese restaurants) with black bean sauce; it is remarkably tasty.

Grilled beef ribs, a crispy whole fish with a slightly spicy chef's sauce and u sam sa (a stir-fried dish of shrimp, scallops, pork and mushrooms) also have happily sated my appetite.

I like that there's a section of the menu devoted to stir-fry specialties that gives various Asian sauces, and you get to choose the meat you want to incorporate and/or the vegetable as well. There's so much to like here within these walls and within the expansive menu.

If you're in the area, you must drop by. I have a feeling you will leave wanting to repeat the experience. Wang Tcheng: 1199 N. Euclid St., (between La Palma and Romneya) Anaheim, (714) 778-9888.

Pelican Hill Stay

The Resort at Pelican Hill has debuted. What a glamorous piece of real estate.

The chef for the signature Andrea restaurant was recruited from Italy. We've known the executive chef of the property, Jean-Pierre Dubray, for 30 years (he's honed an international reputation for himself in San Francisco but he started out here in Orange County).

There are four other restaurants as well (including the cute and casual Caffé and the ultra attractive Pelican Grill down the street) so a stroll around the property and a meal would make for a very good outing. May I add that with the penchant to stay closer to home for vacations now, this might even be your absolute dream getaway for a few days.

I've not eaten at Andrea yet, so I will report back on that as soon as I can get myself there. However, in looking at the charms of the restaurant, the interiors are more eye candy.

Resort at Pelican Hill: 22701 Pelican Hill Road South, Newport Coast, (800) 820-6800.

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