

WASHINGTON POLITICAL WATCH

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RESTAURANTS

SAN FRANCISCO

One thing about all of the restaurants we visited on a recent trip to San Francisco was the variety and quality of the fresh foods.

Quince

1701 Octavia Street

San Francisco, California 94109

Reservations 415-775-8500 (Noon-9pm)

If this is not the single best restaurant at which we have ever eaten, it is certainly in the top 2 or 3.

Being in any San Francisco restaurant with Stan and Julia is always a treat. (Stan thinks it is because of him; fact is, that it is because of Julia.)

There are only about 45 seats in the main restaurant, mainly tables of 2 and 4, but there is table in a front window alcove that seats up to six.

The restaurant is very nicely appointed. It is not large, and while the tables are relatively close together, it does not seem crowded. There is a shoulder-high barrier of wood, topped by glass, that separates the entry area from the tables.

Glass chandeliers and sconces contributes to the atmosphere.

There is a chef's table (seats 10) located in what, at first glance, appears to be

an unfinished basement. The table is located next to the bakery and the vegetable prep station. To get to the table you walk through a door in the back of the restaurant, past the kitchen, and down a steep flight of stairs.

The food and the preparation are superb. Even the bread tray is special. The bread sticks are quite good, but the real treat is the little round rolls that almost taste like cake.

The meal began with an Amuse bouche of a fish-based mousse on a toasted crouton with sauce.

For a first course, Stan chose Fairview Gardens white asparagus, with Maine lobster, English peas, & chervil. Stanley managed to convince the server to let him have this dish, which was actually part of the Tasting menu. Julia selected buttered lettuce, with Georgia white shrimp, celery hearts and herbs. Carol opted for a smoked trout salad with Mariquita Farm beets & horseradish. I chose crispy sardines with raw purple asparagus salad and mint.

As a second course, Stan had pappardelle, with pork sausage & red mustard greens. Carol picked fettuccine verde, with green asparagus with white asparagus cream, and I chose agnolotti dal plin, a traditional Piedmontese-filled pasta.

For the 3rd course, Stan had the Thai snapper, with fennel, cauliflower and orange-saffron fumetto. Carol chose John Dory, with Bloomsdale spinach & porcini mushrooms. I also chose a fish, Eastern skate with black trumpet mushroom puree, young onions, and asparagus. Julia had the Fettuccine verde.

Dessert was beyond our capacity, but there was an extensive dessert menu with 6 prepared desserts and a choice of 11 cheeses.

There is also a Tasting menu, which is only prepared for an entire table. It includes 6 courses, with suggested wines for each course. This costs \$140 (food alone is \$85), plus \$10 if you want a cheese supplement. While we did not try this menu, there is no doubt in my mind that it would be worth the cost in both dollars and calories.

The service is unparalleled. There are at least 10-12 serving people in the main dining room, in addition to several folks who greet and seat guests. While there is a principal server assigned to each table, each course is served to each person at the table all but simultaneously, with each server being responsible for serving no more than two people. For example, when each course was served to a table of six, it was delivered by 3 servers.

The sommelier used to be at another fine San Francisco restaurant, Gary Danko.

Quince is owned by Michael and Lindsay Tusk. Michael is the chef, while Lindsay attends to the dining room. Interestingly, one of places at which Michael trained was Chez Panisse, which is also reviewed in this issue.

The unisex restroom is the narrowest I have ever encountered. It can't be more than 4 feet wide and about twice as long. Yet, even with its diminutive size, it is as elegant as the restaurant of which it is a part.

Immediately to the left as you enter is a narrow, mottled orange/tan and white marble counter that juts out in a half circle to accommodate the small white ceramic washbasin. There is a long silver tray at the end that holds fluffy white rolled towels.

At the end of this narrow room is a white ceramic commode.

The floor is covered with large tan tiles. The walls are painted light tan.

There is valet parking and reservations are a must.

[Note: Subsequent to our visit, Hilary and Jane went there for dinner at your editor's suggestion. They were equally delighted.]

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Boulevard

One Mission Street
San Francisco, California 94105
415-543-6084
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info@boulevardrestaurant.com

The restaurant is long from front to back; in fact, a block long. There is a bar along the wall from the front to about a third of the way back. There is also a second bar that starts about 25 feet later, along the same wall that fronts on the open kitchen. It is clear that folks eat at the 2nd bar, that=s not clear about the first. The two bars seat about 25 people.

The dining room runs the length of the restaurant, and seats about 160. There is a small private dining room that seats 10-12 people.

As is often the case when having a meal with Peter, before dinner was served, in responding to Peter's questions, our server had shared with us an abbreviated version of her life story. The exchange with our server continued throughout the meal. The service was excellent.

Peter started with Glazed Sweetbreads with Roman Style Artichokes, Bacon Marmalade, Baby Cabbage, and Frisee. I opted for Rabbit, Wild Mushroom & Rapini Ravioli, with Truffled Pecorino, Hazelnut Pesto, and Braising Jus.

Moving on, Peter selected Wood Over Roasted Angus Filet Mignon, Pan Roasted Yukon Gold Potatoes and Mushrooms, French Beans with Applewood Bacon and Crispy Shallots, Mushroom Fritters, Tomato Aioli & Red Wine Beef Jus. I chose the Wild Caught & Pan Roasted California White Sea Bass, with Spring Pea Risotto, Dungeness Crab Thighs, Snap Peas, and Miners Lettuce.

The dessert options were just too good to pass up. Peter savored the Chocolate Truffle Cake with Fleur de Sei Chocolate Caramel, Butter Pecan Ice Cream, and Whiskey Chocolate Ice Cream.

Because I thought I should have fruit for dessert, I ordered Strawberry Rhubarb Ice Box Cake, with layers of Pixie Tangerine & Chai Cheesecake, Warm Rhubarb, and Fresh Strawberries.

One other thing that I particularly liked was the fact that when I ordered iced tea, I received a glass of iced tea and a carafe

of same that was left on the table. A glass with additional ice showed up about half way through the meal.

Peter and I agreed that this was an excellent meal.

The men's room is large and "L" shaped and its own way quite special.

As you enter, a black marble counter with two metal washbasins is on the right, under a very large framed mirror.

As you turn the corner at the heel of the "L," you first come upon two white ceramic urinals with a gray marble divider between them. To their left are two commode stalls, with grey marble walls that are open at top and bottom. Each has a heavy wooden door.

The walls are covered, to about the 4 foot level, with a grey/green raised relief. The walls above are painted.

The floor is covered with large off-white tiles, except for a row of half-sized black tiles at the wall, running around the room.

As you start to leave the commode area, you note that, among the pictures on the wall, are several old-style female nudes.

Then, as you stand at the counter to wash your hands, you can not help but notice in the mirror the large frame with dozens of photos old and new female nudes on the wall behind you. Of the many restrooms that WW has reviewed this is a first.

We asked our female server whether they were pictures of male nudes in the woman's restroom. She assured us there were not.

There is valet parking and reservations are suggested.

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Chez Panisse

1517 Shattuck Avenue
Berkeley, California 94709
510-548-5525
www.chezpanisse.com

There are really two restaurants. On the main floor, there is a dining room that on any given day serves only a single meal for dinner. If that meal is not to your liking there are no alternatives.

The menus for a whole week are available. On the night we did not eat there the menu was grilled asparagus with morel cream, Dungeness crab bisque with aioli and crouton, whole roasted Sonoma County Liberty duck with green and black olives, potatoes with pancetta, and Chino Ranch flat black cabbage, and Page mandarin, grapefruit and Meyer lemon sherbet coupe.

Carol and I had dinner with Florence and Peter in the Café on the 2nd floor. The Café is relatively narrow and quite long. As you come off the stairs, dead ahead there is an area of small round tables and chairs on which folks can wait for their party to fill out or until their table is ready. It is the restaurant's policy to not seat anyone until the whole party has assembled.

To the right, there is a table across from the seating area that seems able to seat up to 8 people. It was set for 4, but not used the night we were there.

Including that section for 4, there is seating for about 45 people in 2s, 3s, and 4s. One section of this part of the Café is raised

about 4 feet above the rest of the restaurant, and seats about 10.

The tables are pretty close together, and covered with white cloths and white paper.

To the left, at the top of the stairs, is a serving bar and the open kitchen. There are also two additional seating areas. Across from the kitchen are 4 booths, each of which seats up to 5 people. At the end of the kitchen, there is a room that seats another 20 people in 2s and 4s.

Peter and Carol started with Baked Sonoma goat cheese with Viki's lettuces. Florence and Mike selected the red beet soup with creme fraiche. We also ordered for the table Monterey Bay sardine toasts with frisee and cardoon salad, and a plate of olives.

As her second course, Carol selected hand-cut egg noodles with fava beans, ramps and pecorino; Florence ordered Northern halibut with grilled asparagus, anise hyssop, and shoestring potatoes. Peter and Mike had grilled Hoffman Farm chicken breast, with potato-sorrel gratin and tapenade. Peter also ordered an additional plate of the shoestrings, which were quite good.

For dessert we shared an order of Meyer lemon sorbet with Moscato d'Asti and langues de chat, and a bowl of Jim Churchill's Pixie tangerines and Fly Disc Ranch Barhi dates.

While our principal waiter was a little officious, the service was generally good.

The men's room is small, dingy, and slightly musty. As you enter, there is a

small dark stone counter just to the left with a gold colored metal washbasin.

Next to the counter is a floor-to-ceiling solid wall that juts out about 2.5-3 feet. On the other side of the wall is a white ceramic commode. Across from the commode, in the relatively small room, is a white ceramic urinal.

The floor is covered with large dark tiles, and the walls are painted a tannish yellow wall.

Overall this room is not special.

Reservations are essential.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Corduroy

1201 K Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20005
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202-589-0699
Fax 202-589-0688

When you arrive at 12th and K and don't immediately see the restaurant, don't give up. The restaurant is located on the 2nd floor of the Four Points Hotel.

Chris and I arrived for lunch, and saw a large sign in a main floor window that would make you believe that the restaurant is behind that window. No such luck. The only way to the restaurant is through the hotel lobby, but even when you enter the lobby, the location of the restaurant is still a mystery.

We never did see a sign directing us to the restaurant. Chris asked a person walking by and they directed us upstairs. We took the elevator to the 2nd floor. Even when we got off the elevator, it was a

challenge to find the restaurant. Turn right after you get off the elevator, or left, if you decide to use the stairs.

As you enter there is, directly ahead, a walled-off area, including a long bar and a good number of tables.

There are about 70 seats - 2s & 4s - with a banquette running along the far wall of the dining room.

I tried to get a noon reservation, but could not get a reservation before 12:30 p.m. It was a little hard to understand that limitation since there were a number of tables available when we arrived, and it does not seem likely that at that hour they had been vacated by a first round of diners.

It seemed particularly noisy as the dining room filled up.

Service was timely, but I don't think we saw a single smile on a captain, serving person, or bus person during our entire visit.

There are 8 first courses, 8 second courses, and 10 desserts. The prices are moderate.

Chris had the potato leek soup, which was just okay, followed by duck confit with savoy cabbage

I had the warm goat cheese in crispy potato - which was quite good. The cheese was firm and warm, and the fine string potatoes were very crispy. For my second course, I chose crispy striped bass with sherry vinegar sauce.

We shared pistachio bread pudding with a dollop of ice cream.

The portion sizes were about right for lunch.

The restaurant does not have its own bathroom. Rather you are directed to the hotel bathroom, which is like a thousand other standard hotel bathrooms...not worth writing about. Finding it is also a challenge.

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PS7

777 I Street NW
Washington, D.C.
202-742-8550
PS7restaurant.com

The restaurant opened in September 2006. The PS is from the name of the chef/owner Peter Smith and the 7 comes from the 777 address.

As you enter the restaurant, there is bar area to the right. There are 10 high stools at the bar, and a seating area, with a padded high backbench, along one wall, and a variety of comfortable chairs that in total seems to accommodate about two dozen people.

The dining area is to the left. First, there is a dining room filled with tables of 4 and tables of 2 that could be moved around to create larger tables. The room holds about 40 as configured.

Outside the dining room is another dining area that runs the length of what is a fairly narrow room. The dining area is on two levels, running the length of the area.

On the raised area there is a row of 4s and deuces. On the floor, there is another row of 4s, and across the narrow area of couple of deuces. The area seems to seat about 32.

At the end of this area there is a semi-private dining area. There is a curtain that is pulled over the large opening to the area. The evening we were there it had one large

table that could seat 10 around a large square. But it appeared that it could also be broken up into four 4s.

The menu is somewhat unusual. There are 5 columns of items with a price at the top of each column, being the cost of each of the items. The columns ranged from \$10 to \$23. There is a sixth column that is a 5-course tasting menu, priced at \$77 and \$107 with wines.

The foods in each column seem to grow in size of portion from the lowest priced to the highest priced. It appears that the \$10, \$13 and \$15 columns are intended to be appetizers, but for sure the items in the \$15 column work well as small entrees.

I started with Sarah's Salad, composed of Bosc pears, Maytag blue cheese, dried cherries, spiced walnuts, pickled pearl onions, mini croutons, and Pear Nectar Dressing.

I then selected as my "entree" two items. From the \$13 column I chose Speck Ham Wrapped Monkfish, with spice roasted butternut squash and Chanterelle Mushroom Broth. The other selection from the \$15 column was Pan Roast Duck Breast, with Mission figs, raised parsnips and Roasted pearl onions with Rosemary Jus. For certain the latter dish was ample as a main course.

The other 8 people in our group selected a variety of items, including Butter Nut Squash Soup, Portobella Mushroom Carpaccio, Sarah's Salad, Pan Roasted Rockfish, Pan Seared Sea Scallops, and Red Wine Braised Beef Shortribs.

No one in our group had dessert, but there are some appropriately decadent selections.

The men's room is all black, except for the white wash basins, urinals, commode, and large charcoal gray tiles covering the floor. There are black mid-size tiles from floor to ceiling, covering the entire back wall. The lighting is subdued.

As you enter the room you can't help but notice to your left, at about the 6+ foot level, two gold fish bowls embedded in the wall. There are several goldfish swimming in each one. There is an opening at the top of the bowl that allows air into the bowl.

There are two urinals straight ahead, separated by a partial wall between them, that is about 3 feet high. The commode is situated next to the urinals, but it is enclosed in floor-to-ceiling walls and a door.

Across from the commode area is a black marble counter with two wash basins and a large round mirror.

There is valet parking

Mike

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