

Addison

Review

ROBIN KLEVEN DISHON



Jumbo day-boat scallops with Fuji apples and black winter truffles

location > 5200 Grand Del Mar Way, Carmel Valley

phone > 858-314-1900

chef > William Bradley

YOU PASS THROUGH wooden gates, not pearly ones, to enter The Grand Del Mar. Still, it feels like heaven, or at the very least, a darned good facsimile.

The Grand Del Mar epitomizes the Good Life, with plans for luxurious time-share villas and a swanky hotel in addition to the designer golf links and plush country club. The sweeping country views at sunset recall the hills of Tuscany—give or take a few McMansions on the horizon—and the soothing scents of sage, lavender and *la vie en rose* perfume the air.

Idyllic as it all is, nothing on this rarefied acreage is lovelier than Addison. Tucked into the resort's 50,000-square-foot clubhouse, Addison evokes gracious living and grand European hotels. Part hacienda, part chateau, the restaurant is a decorator's fantasy of Italian marble columns, Moorish arches, limestone fireplaces, inlaid ceilings and massive chandeliers. (The namesake is one Addison Mizner, a Florida architect of the early 1900s known for his extravagantly Déco designs.)

The décor is impressive; the ambience, pleasingly privileged. But it's the keenly focused California/Mediterranean cuisine and impeccable service that provide the bedrock of Addison's charms.

Chef William Bradley honed his skills with mentor James Boyce at places like Azzura Point and The Phoenician, developing a signature style that blends exuberance and restraint, classicism and modernity. In his hands, a timeworn dish like fondue becomes fresh.

Of his cooking, Bradley says modestly, "Everything has already been done. I get inspiration from the history of food. What makes it mine is the techniques I've developed, and knowing what I like."

We like what Bradley likes. That golden-oldie fondue, for example, is reborn in a soup-plattered *amuse bouche* of silky melted Parmesan, champagne and cream topped with curried yogurt and a bracing dash of orange. Jaded palates and tired taste buds will spring to attention.

Fondue's a featured appetizer, too (\$20), prepared from aged Gouda cheese, shallots and Newcastle beer, then poured over tiny nuggets of potato gnocchi and topped with a soft-yolked egg that melds into a luscious sauce. Other ambrosial starters include the Santa Barbara spot prawns—a species notable for their large size and exceptional sweetness—simply highlighted by a browned butter sauce (\$17), and a deceptively firm morsel of foie gras (\$22) that dissolves all too quickly in the mouth. (Braised puréed cabbage on the side, however, was too salty.)

SEAFOOD IS A MAJOR THEME, and an international one. Classic steamed mussels conjure North Africa with palate-tickling charmoula (a chili paste similar to harissa) and a dollop of lemon purée for cool contrast (\$18). Dover sole (\$38) basks in mellower seas, sauced by vin jaune, France's aged yellow wine that imparts sherry notes. Finally, loup de mer, the Mediterranean's meaty "wolf of the sea," sports a crackling crisp skin and gleaming flesh garnished with roasted tomatillo (\$35) .

Order the plainly named lamb (\$46) and you get Niman Ranch meat two ways: a portion of rare roasted rack, carved off the bone and crowned with fresh herbs, and a barbecued sausage meatball moistened with goat cheese

Order poularde (\$34) and you'll savor a fattened hen that must have cruised through her barnyard days on a sedan chair, so tender and succulent is the meat. Don't let the so-called gingerbread sauce deter you; it's savory, not sugarplum sweet.

Vegetable purées accompany most entrées and include white bean, roasted tomatillo and butternut squash. All are so finely milled they could have been strained through an Hermès scarf. Bradley credits a Vitamix blender and years of practice. We think it's magic.

For desserts (\$12 apiece), Addison trotted out bittersweet-chocolate mousse sassed up with passionfruit and layered hazelnut parfait embellished with caramel and baked pear.

As gifted as the chefs are, they have serious competition in sommelier Jesse Rodriguez. This gentleman not only knows his wines but adores his job.

Give him a budget—say, \$50 or \$75 for two diners—and he'll create "a wine experience" for you, matching varietals by the glass or half-glass to your courses with unerring skill. A golden splash of beerenauslese with your foie gras; a cult Burgundy with your poularde; perhaps some Corton Charlemagne poured from a 3-liter bottle—these are front-row seats on food and wine's best marriages. Given the 1,600-plus selections on the wine list —and the considerable markup that puts many in the three- to four-digit price range—Rodriguez's affable guidance is invaluable.

Service here is as smartly synchronized as USC's marching band. The proper silverware for your course is provided, then whisked away when no longer needed. Dishes are brought to the table simultaneously, not piecemeal. Servers are watchful but never hover. And with bottled-water prices adding a goodly chunk to today's dining tabs, here's a thoughtful touch: Sparkling or still water comes free, as do endless refills.

Addison, you're a formal and formidable addition to the San Diego scene. We've been waiting for you.

Addison serves dinner Tuesday-Sunday at 5200 Grand Del Mar Way (south of State Route 56 in Carmel Valley), 858-314-1900; addisondelmar.com. Reservations highly recommended.