

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Double the pleasure

Two creative chefs bring their personal best to new San Diego County restaurants: Addison and the modern bistro Market.

By S. Irene Virbila, Times Staff Writer
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Two new restaurants in north San Diego County — Market, a contemporary American bistro in Del Mar, and Addison, a golf resort dining room in Carmel Valley — are setting the bar ever higher in that part of the world. They're very different, but each is as good as anything in Los Angeles right now.

Dinner on the green

Market is not the only new game in this part of Southern California. Late last year, Addison opened, well before the scheduled fall 2007 launch of the rest of the luxury golf resort, the Grand Del Mar. Driving past the guardhouse, down a long winding drive, we come across what looks like a grand, Moorish-Spanish palace extravagantly lighted and flanked by perfectly manicured palm trees. At the top of the circular drive couples step out of polished European driving machines. This, I find it hard to believe, is the restaurant?

Yes, unbelievably, it is. The foyer has a high, gold-leafed ceiling. In the bar, a well-heeled crowd sips vintage Champagne in front of the fireplace. The bar is a long slab of black marble with marble parquet floors and swags of beaded silk curtains overhead. The dining room is framed in ornate black marble pillars and furnished with heavy, dark furniture and striped armchairs. Moorish and Spanish decorative features evoke 1920s Palm Beach and Boca Raton, Fla. In fact, the restaurant is named for Addison Mizner, the architect whose opulent signature style defines vintage Boca Raton resort architecture. Donald Trump would be right at home.

Fortunately, the blustering stops short of the kitchen. The resort found chef William Bradley at the highly regarded restaurant Vu in the Hyatt Regency in Scottsdale, Ariz. Before that the San Diego-born chef worked with Montage chef James Boyce at Azzura Point at Loews Coronado Bay Resort and at Mary Elaine's at the Phoenician in Scottsdale.

Just 30, Bradley is turning out poised, coolly elegant cooking that's completely unexpected in this florid country club setting. He's got all the right moves. A starter of gnocchi in an aged Gouda cheese fondue with a coddled egg nestled in the middle and a shaving of black Périgord truffles is stunningly good, the egg yolk flowing out to meld the flavors of potato, cheese and truffles.

He serves meaty prawns in a *beurre noisette* (brown butter) that brings out the prawn's inherent sweetness and punctuates that with luscious dates and a tart lemon-lime jam. The combination is sensational. He gives a nod to the Spanish-Mediterranean accents in the décor with mussels steamed with Moroccan spices and served with a gossamer Meyer lemon mousseline.



At Addison in Carmel Valley, chef William Bradley, turns out intriguing, coolly elegant dishes in a golf resort setting.

Here's a chef who has the confidence to send out an understated but perfect risotto lavished with butter and Parmigiano and embellished with a line of bright green parsley and toasted pine nuts dusted with sugar. Or sumptuous Taylor Bay scallops napped in *beurre d'Isigny*, the famous French butter, and accented with nothing more than a few celery leaves. For many chefs, it would just seem too plain. Believe me, it's astonishingly good.

His main courses are just as intriguing. I loved the cod in a veil of golden batter, accompanied by a single charred tomatillo, a mound of puréed beans the color of eggplant and a puddle of burnt orange chorizo sauce with a nice kick of heat. The tastes are vivid and pure. Dover sole garnished with pistachios comes with a sauce of vin jaune, the nutty "yellow" wine from the Jura in eastern France, and a delicate parsnip pudding.



Potato gnocchi with cocotte egg and truffles is stunning.

Bradley's dishes don't read or taste like anybody else's. Even a chicken breast seems interesting from his hands. Granted, it's a *poularde* (adult female chicken), but he's somehow gotten the taste of sweet spices deep into its flesh, and serves it with two startlingly different puddles of sauce, one a loose purée of foie gras, the other a sweet, complex gingerbread sauce.

There may be a lot going on, occasionally too much, but Bradley's cooking typically has such balance and grace that he keeps each element separate and clean. The experience is more about contrasts, like a work from a painter who doesn't do a lot of blending and keeps colors vivid and distinct.

Addison has another big plus in Jesse Rodriguez, the 31-year-old sommelier, late of the French Laundry in Napa Valley. It's a dream job to be able to build a cellar from scratch for a restaurant with the resources of this one, and he's going at it with gusto. When I was there a few weeks ago, he'd already mustered 1,500 selections for the already stupendous list, and more were on the way.

And what a pleasure it is to pore over his wine list, sussing out the rare and the unusual, and some of them are even affordable. He can offer a beautiful cheese plate too, should you have some wine left in the bottle.

Pastries are also excellent. A lightly spiced, individual cake with dates and walnuts and a lacey ginger-milk sorbet made a strong statement. And I enjoyed a contemporary take on pecan pie, this one a tart made with salted pecans instead of sweet, served with a pecan cream and a light banana gelato.

For a restaurant experience like this one, I might even consider taking up golf.

Addison

Rating: ★★ ★

Location: The Grand Del Mar, 5200 Grand Del Mar Way, San Diego, (858) 314-1900; www.thegradndelmar.com.

Ambience: Luxe golf resort restaurant with flamboyant Floridian-Mediterranean décor and a well-heeled clientele.

Service: Strikes a good balance between formal and friendly. Wine service is exceptional.

Price: Starters, \$15 to \$21; main courses, \$35 to \$46; desserts, \$12; six-course tasting menu, \$110 per person.

Best dishes: Potato gnocchi with Gouda fondue and cocotte egg, mussels with Meyer lemon mousseline, prawns in *beurre noisette*, risotto of pine nuts and Parmigiano, Dover sole with sauce of vin Jaune, gingerbread spiced *poularde*, *loup de mer* with charred tomatillos, cake with dates and walnuts, salted pecan tart.

Wine list: Fascinating and deep, with more than 1,500 selections. Corkage \$25, off-the-list wines only.

Best table: One of the two high-sided booths in the corner.

Details: Open for dinner only from 5 to 10 p.m. Tuesdays through Sundays. Complimentary valet parking.