



A Room With A View

The food's worth savoring too — the crab cakes are as good as ever and just try the prawns now

I have to admit that with all the glittery new construction, hubbub and restaurant openings Downtown over the past few years, Sally's had slipped my mind. You know, Sally's — the seafood restaurant at the Manchester Hyatt overlooking the marina.

"Oh, yeah, I remember now," you say. Well, it's time to transfer Sally's number from your Rolodex to your iPhone, my friends — Sally's is still a darn good eat. It's been at least five years since I last visited Sally's and I don't think much has changed as far as the dining room décor. But when you've got floor-to-ceiling windows with that view of the harbor lights, no one's really spending too much time looking at the upholstery anyway.

Late last year, Executive Chef Sarah Linkenheil took over the kitchen and almost completely revamped the mostly seafood menu. "With the exception of a few of the dishes, I was given carte blanche to make the menu my own," she says. But Sally's famous crab cakes were a hands-off, I venture. "How'd you guess?" she smiles.

Besides the crab cakes, the starter list now offers several other interesting choices. "Sally's Signature Appetizer for Two" (\$32) is a great way to sample most of the offerings. An oversized square platter (that practically takes up the whole table) is presented with four of Sally's most popular starters.

Among them is the crab cake, a toothsome combination of king and Maryland blue crab formed into good-sized cakes, gently sautéed, topped with deep-fried soft-shell crab and served with a chipotle-mango hollandaise. Also on the platter is the "Hunan Duck Quesadilla," which is cleverly plated like a roll-up rather than the typical pancake. But my hands-down favorites were the "Tempura Prawns" — simply done, perfectly cooked in a nice, light batter and served over a zesty mango slaw with ponzu butter and wasabi aioli. Finishing the melange of great tastes is a wonderful lobster soup served in an espresso cup.

Linkenheil's last appointment was at the Hyatt Beaver Creek in Colorado where undoubtedly she cooked a lot more meat and game than seafood. At Sally's she shines with the denizens of the sea. A sampling of her perfectly cooked seafood dishes demonstrates that she has a tender touch for fish. The "Grilled Peppered Ahi" (\$35) is cooked medium-rare, finished with miso-mustard, and served over wilted spinach with creamy mashed potatoes. The combination of the pan juices and miso-mustard swirled into my mashers was delectable.



*Chef Sarah Linkenheil with the Garlic Crusted Moonfish sitting at the chef's table at Sally's.
(photo/alandeckerphoto.com)*

One of the house specialties is the “Garlic Crusted Moonfish” (\$33). Linkenheil is one of the only chefs in town to serve this rich, mild-flavored Hawaiian fish. Give it a try if you’re in the mood for a taste and texture like no other. She finishes the dish with wasabi mashed potatoes and a sweet vanilla-mirin butter sauce — the hot and sweet combo is smashing.

Got a craving for crustacean? Another popular dish is the “Wok-Seared Szechwan Slipper Lobster” (\$38). After a quick go-round in the hot wok with Asian veggies, she serves it on a bed of tender lo mein noodles.

Sally’s

One Market Place
At The Manchester Hyatt
San Diego
(619) 358-6740

For those in the mood for meat, Linkenheil does an excellent “Miso-Gorgonzola Crusted Beef Tenderloin” (\$37) as well as a marinated “Colorado Lamb Loin” (\$36) in a Chinese black bean sauce with wok-fried eggplant. Both are big in flavor and portion (7 to 8 ounces) and escorted by great side dishes.

Desserts are housemade and definitely worth saving room for. I loved the “Vintage Chocolate Crunch” (\$9) — a firm mousse style chocolate with macadamia nut brittle crust, cut into bars and served with a Tahitian vanilla crème anglaise.

Sally’s is a lovely walk from any Downtown condominium or hotel. Downtown dwellers, this definitely should be one your new neighborhood hangouts.

— *Terryl Gavre*