

Los Angeles Times

Daily Dish

The inside scoop on food in Los Angeles

August 25, 2009

Small Bites: Fuego opens in Long Beach, Sol Cocina opens in Newport Beach, Debbie Lee at Gyenari, the new lunch menu at Water Grill



"Latin coastal" in Long Beach: Fuego restaurant is now open in the new Hotel Maya in Long Beach, with a menu that's "coastal Latin American." The executive chef is Jesse Perez. The indoor-outdoor dining room overlooks the waterfront of Long Beach, with 360-degree views. On the menu: shrimp ceviche with chile roja; duck al pastor tacos; chile relleño with pork carnitas; Yucatan-style pork "two ways"; and ancho chile grilled rib eye. Tequila tastings are delivered on a vintage dumb waiter to guests seated in the lower bar area (where there are leather and mohair tequila chairs). *Open daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Hotel Maya, 700 Queensway Drive, Long Beach, (562) 481-3910, www.fuegolongbeach.com.*

"Baja-inspired" in Newport Beach: SOL Cocina restaurant and bar has opened on Pacific Coast Highway in Newport Beach. Executive chef Deborah Schneider is serving "Baja-inspired" dishes such as sauteed tangerine shrimp, mango-lobster tostadas, and ceviches, as well kurobuta pork carnitas and buttered tequila-steamed clams. The bar stocks more than 50 varieties of tequilas and mezcals. *251 Pacific Coast Highway, Newport Beach, www.solcocina.com.*

Debbie does Gyenari: The judges on "[The Next Food Network Star](#)" raved about Debbie Lee's cooking. If you want to find out what the fuss was all about, you might want to try Gyenari in Culver City, which bills itself as an "upscale Korean BBQ destination." Lee, a Los Angeles-based restaurant consultant who made it to the final three of the Food Network competition, has revamped Gyenari's menu. Lee calls her style "Seoul to Soul," in homage to her unconventional upbringing: Her parents were Korean immigrants who settled in the South. Lee was raised on collard greens and fried chicken, and wasn't introduced to Korean food until she was well into her teens. Now, she puts a Korean spin on traditional Southern fare. On the menu at Gyenari: a SeoulTown Po' Boy made with sesame shrimp tempura, cilantro slaw and chile tomatoes; a crispy chile-crusting snapper with soy bean succotash and twice-fried pork belly; and pan-seared pork chops with Fuji apple gravy and kimchee smashed potatoes. 9540 Culver Blvd., Culver City, (310) 838-3131, www.gyenari.com.

New lunch menu at Water Grill: Chef David Lefevre has unveiled a new lunch menu, with salads such as Sea of Cortez white shrimp Caesar salad and sandwiches such as albacore tuna confit and lobster roll. Entrees include Cedar Key clam and sweet corn orchiette with Niman Ranch bacon and sweet basil and Alaskan halibut sauteed and basted with lavender, Meyer lemon and Madagascar vanilla bean oil. The current oyster selection: Malaspina, Fanny Bay, Evening Cove, Kumamoto, Bagaduce and Beausoleil. 544 S. Grand Ave., Los Angeles, (213) 891-0900, www.watergrill.com.

-- Betty Hallock and Rene Lynch

Photo: Gyenari. Credit: Glenn Koenig/Los Angeles Times.