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Rock'N Fish Manhattan Beach lives up to its name, one reviewer's opinion



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By [Paula Duffy](#) on 2013-03-29 [✉](#)

Fresh seafood and plenty of it isn't the only delight on the menu of this eatery located one block from the Manhattan Beach pier.



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Rock'N Fish Manhattan Beach is the original location opened by the brothers David and Michael Zislis and what a location it is.

In business since November 2000, the success of the restaurant's concept and menu has spawned a location at LA Live in downtown Los Angeles and one in Laguna Beach, both opened in the last four years.

The layout

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The dining area is situated outside the front door, resembling a big open air porch. Reservations are recommended for weekends and evenings.

Inside you'll find the bar which extends along the length of the left wall. It is stocked with a full complement of wines and spirits and there is extra seating available at tall tables with stools for dining or imbibing. The wine list should suit any visitor, with both white, red and sparkling wines well represented with California selections dominating the selections.

There is a room on the second floor, visible from the bar area that can be used for a private party that can serve upwards of 30 people.

For a Tuesday afternoon lunch, the dining area was nearly full at one o'clock in the afternoon.

The menu

Get ready for fine dining at the beach. This is not bar food or even craft beer pub food. A quick peek at the restaurant's Yelp reviews gives you a true feel for the concerned service and well prepared dishes.

What you notice while reading the extensive menu is how many dishes use New Orleans or Louisiana in their names. According to both my server Shannon and the restaurant's hostess Hayley, the Zislis brothers developed a fondness for the cuisine and brought some of that flair to Southern California.

You'd be wrong to think it consists of merely blackening fish or meat with Cajun spices.

Don't fret if you are a beef lover. I would be surprised if they didn't have your favorite cut of steak --- rib eye, fillet, N.Y. strip and sirloin are either aged up to a month or marinated for days.

According to the restaurant manager Gerry Martel, the owners are fans of the Chicago-style steak houses and drew on that influence when creating their steak dishes.

Cocktails

Having visited the LA Live location on numerous occasions I was anxious to see if the cocktails were as good and the freshness of the seafood would be replicated at the beach. I was not disappointed.

Among its Rock'N Martinis is a Cucumber Mint Lemonade selection made with Nolet's Gin, muddled mint and cucumbers, sugar and lemon juice. Fresh mint and cucumber gave the drink its pale green color. The mixture struck the right balance and resulted in a great gin drink that was light and fresh tasting.

I can attest to the zest and taste of the Fireworks Bloody Mary, ordered more than once at the LA Live location. Freshly made daily the cocktail mix is hand shaken using Smirnoff vodka and topped off with a fresh piece of shrimp in addition to an olive.

The meal

My guest and I began our meal with one of the daily specials. Manhattan Clam Chowder cannot be found just anywhere in the beach communities and when you stumble on it, its resemblance to the real thing can disappoint. Not so at Rock'N Fish.

The broth was not a deep tomato red. Instead it resembled that of a

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vegetable soup, most particularly a homemade Italian minestrone. With fresh chunks of clam nested among the vegetables and broth, it had European flavor that was surprising.

I was told that Executive Chef Shaun Dry adds a bit of flour to the base of the soup to achieve the results.

Along with the chowder came a Fresh Dungeness Crabmeat Cocktail served with a mustard aïoli in addition to tradition cocktail sauce. The color and texture of the crabmeat were pleasing and the freshness made dipping it truly unnecessary.

For our entrees we chose the New Orleans BBQ Shrimp, served in an iron skillet. The seafood is sauteed along with vegetables and served with a mound of sticky rice. The hot and spicy sauce has a kick to it along with a sweetness that is noticeable. I was a bit disappointed at what seemed like an over abundance of oil used to saute the dish, but had no complaints about the Louisiana flavor and the large barbecued shrimp.

My guest went for old an school salad selection, the Seattle-style Shrimp and Avocado Louie. You can substitute crab or add it along with the shrimp which is just what he did, calling it a fresh and delicious reminder of "the old days". Served cold with iceberg lettuce along side hard boiled eggs, red cabbage green olives and tomatoes, the profusion of color made it look as pleasing as it tasted.

Dessert too

It is MUST to leave room for dessert at Rock'N Fish. I recommend you go bold and order the New Orleans Style Bread Pudding. The bread sits in a shallow pool of sauce that mixes Jack Daniels sipping whiskey along with brown sugar and cinnamon. The portion is large enough for two and sits next to big, cone shaped dollop of fresh whipped cream.

The mixture of tastes creates almost a cinnamon bun flavor to the bread, and there is just enough JD in it for you to know it's there. It is heavenly.

Rock'N Fish Manhattan Beach is worth the trip and the challenging parking situation. There are a couple of public lots close by that help, but as is typical in beach communities, parking is at a premium. Call ahead for reservations if you can and you won't be disappointed.

The restaurant is open seven days a week with lunch service beginning at at 11:30. The kitchen closes at 10:00 pm Sunday through Wednesday, 10:30 Thursday, and 11:00 on Friday and Saturday.. Rock'N Fish is located at 120 Manhattan Beach Boulevard and can be found online, [here](#).

Image: Rock'N Fish, Manhattan Beach, CA

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