

Luxury Web

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95 Cordova Restaurant

Casa Monica Hotel
95 Cordova Street
St. Augustine, Florida 32084
www.casamonica.com

Housed in the stunning Casa Monica Hotel, 95 Cordova is one of the premier restaurants in St. Augustine Florida, offering a New World eclectic blend of American, Asian, Mediterranean, Caribbean and Moroccan specialties. Restored in 1999 to its original 1888 opulence by hotelier Richard C. Kessler of Orlando as part of the Kessler Collection, an international group of themed hotels, Casa Monica is an AAA Four Diamond property.

Enter into the Spanish-Moorish building, pass the Cobalt Lounge in the lobby, and turn right into a hallway that leads to the main dining room and another



world, with its exotic Moroccan tile tabletops, hand-made chandeliers and high backed baronial chairs. Tonight we are having dinner in the intimate and inviting Wine Room, one of three private dining rooms available for group gatherings.

Our group of food writers was a sure guarantee that we would enjoy a sampling of several of the enticing menu selections and dinner began with heady anticipation. Conversation halted as

we sipped our wine and seriously perused the extensive menu and checked with one other to make sure not to duplicate dishes. A 2005 Sonoma Cutrer Chardonnay from Russian River Ranches and a 2005 Fess Parker Pinot Noir from

the / **zimmerman** / agency

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Santa Barbara County were the two wines served and both paired well with the various dishes we selected. I particularly enjoyed the Chardonnay, which was medium bodied without being oaked and exhibited green apple with hints of citrus on the palate. We tasted assorted appetizers such as the Island Spiced Lump Crab Cake with Lemon and Mustard Aioli; Kessler Calamari, an unusual Cornmeal Dusted Spicy Curry signature dish; Cordova Jumbo Tiger Shrimp; and Pacific Rim Ahi Tuna Sashimi. The tuna was my favorite, both in taste and eye appeal, it was served raw, shaped like a rose and accompanied by Seaweed and Rice Slaw with Pickled Ginger. There were appetizing salads to choose from such as Iceberg lettuce with Toasted Pecans, Raisins, Apple Wood Smoked Bacon, Aged Mozzarella and finished with a Creamy Basil Oil Dressing or the signature 95 Cordova Caesar of Romaine Hearts, shredded Pecorino Romano and Blue Cheese with an Asiago Cheese Cookie, Pickled Ginger and Caesar Dressing.



The entrée presented a plethora of exotic choices, from the Moroccan Caramelized Long Island Duckling, to Seafood Strudel with Shrimp, Scallops and Salmon, to Walnut and Goat Cheese Crusted New Zealand Rack of Lamb, to Olive and Blue Cheese Crusted Omaha Filet Mignon. In the end I settled on Chilean Sea Bass with Cilantro Truffle Oil and was rewarded with a tasty, perfectly cooked filet. Topped with a crusty coating the large diagonal flakes of fish fairly melted in my mouth. The Yukon Gold Mash Potatoes were

flavorsome but a little heavy for the meaty fish while the crispy Asparagus with Balsamic Reduction was a perfect accompaniment.

Dessert was yet another opportunity to sample many tempting confections and the Baked Alaskan Key Lime Wedge and Kessler Bananas Foster stood out.