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LIFEFOOD



Pork stew packs veggie nutrition

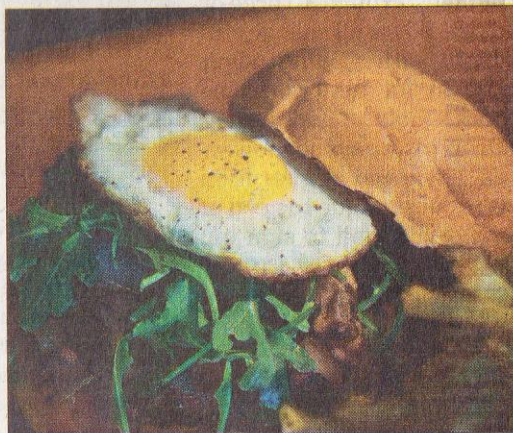
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THURSDAY, JAN. 12, 2012

370 Common casually trendy



CINDY YAMANAKA, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

With its inventive small plates and family-style dinners, Laguna Beach's 370 Common brings together some of the best things going on in the food world. **Review on Page 2.**

REVIEW

It's familiar but not commonplace

Laguna Beach eatery's approach is as warm and flavorful as it is trendy.

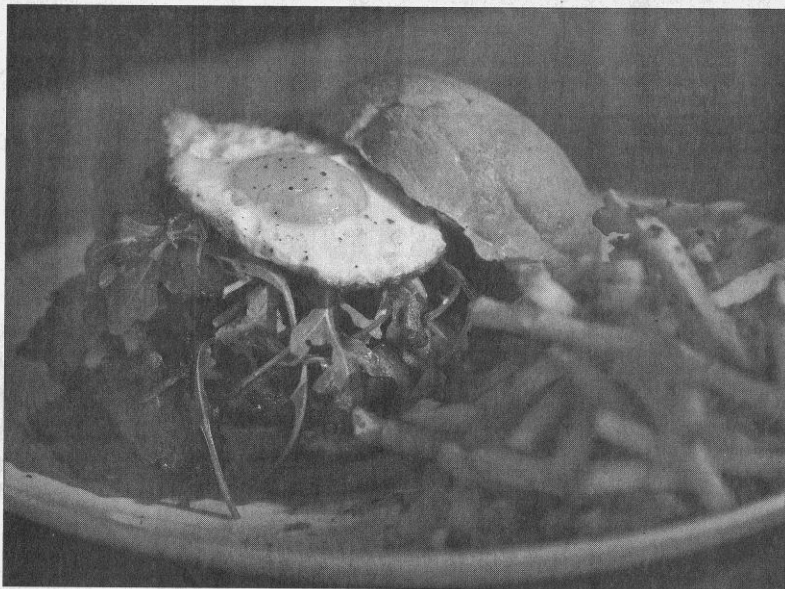
By CLAUDIA KOERNER
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

With its local ingredients, inventive small plates and family-style dinners, 370 Common is hitting the high notes of current restaurant trends.

The restaurant, which opened last fall, is an update on Sorrento Grille, a favorite for years in downtown Laguna Beach. Former Sorrento chef Ryan Adams continues to helm the kitchen, but now he's also the owner, bringing his own character to the establishment. The result — though trendy it may be — isn't a hipper-than-thou hot spot. Instead, it harnesses some of the best things going on in the food world right now in a casually elegant setting.

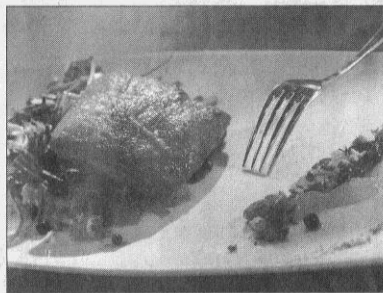
I enlist a friend who was a longtime fan of Sorrento to weigh in on the new concept. Almost immediately, she's won over, and it looks as if plenty of others are as well. Even on a Tuesday night, the restaurant is bustling, with the only open seats available at the bar overlooking the kitchen. Though quarters here are a little tighter, it's almost like dinner and a show as stovetops flash and pans clatter.

The drink menu is impressive, with favorite brews like Allagash and the local Bruery earning spots. An affordably priced glass of pinot noir is surprisingly crisp. What's essentially gourmet Chex mix comes complimentary with the drinks, and it's pleasant to munch while planning an attack on the menu. Though it only spans one page, there's much to peruse — from



PHOTOS: CINDY YAMANAKA, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Nothing revolutionary here: It's a hamburger gussied up with some gourmet-style fixings, including a fried egg, arugula, bacon, aioli and charred onions. But it's a mountain of deliciousness, so it rates the \$14 price tag.



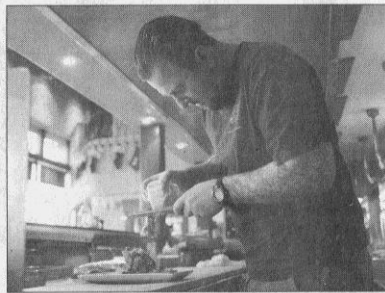
Rich, prime pig is what makes the pork belly with pistachios, arugula and citrus vinaigrette soar.

bite-sized eats, like single oysters, to small plates to entrees.

We start with a kale salad (\$10) as a nod to healthy eating. The dark greens prove to be a treat, however, and their customary bitter flavor is hidden with a

bright citrus vinaigrette. Shavings of pecorino cheese add a sharp saltiness; walnuts bring a crunch. Persimmons and currants are explosively sweet and juicy.

Bruschetta with Parmesan and wild mushrooms



Chef and owner Ryan Adams wields his kitchen skills. His 370 Common was formerly the Sorrento Grille.

(\$13) similarly goes to delicious lengths. The ingredients here are simpler, but each shines. Bread is on the burned side of well-done, perhaps too much so for some palates, but I enjoy the smokiness it brings to the dish. Mushrooms

show the exquisite range of the fungi. Each adds a slightly different flavor and texture, and all offer buttery richness.

Rich barely begins to describe the pork belly (\$14). The brick of meat is so tender it jiggles. Outside, it's

370 Common

Where: 370 Glendeyre St., Laguna Beach
Info: 949-494-8686, 370common.com
Hours: 5 p.m.-close
Tuesdays-Sundays
Recommended: kale salad, pork belly, burger

been cooked to a crisp, like a perfect strip of bacon. Inside, it's the molten essence of pork.

On the more traditional entrees, the restaurant continues with its new take. Pork loin (\$23) starts with a perfectly cooked cut of meat, then adds a barbecue sauce flavored with harissa, a North African chili paste. An apple and sweet onion slaw keeps the dish moist and from being ordinary.

The restaurant really outdoes itself on the burger. A sizable, quality beef patty is stacked beyond belief with cheddar, arugula, a fried egg, bacon, mushrooms and charred onions and rounded out with a chili aioli. This ultimate burger earns its \$14 price tag. Salty shoestring fries come with a lime-flavored ketchup — no detail is overlooked.

With drink specials throughout the week and a prix-fixe supper Sundays, the restaurant is aiming to create a community around the common table that now defines its dining room. Like the other updates, this works. Before I even finish my plate, I'm looking forward to future trips, whether it's an after-work drink or a three-course dinner.

Chef Adams' new concept has brought new life to the restaurant, harnessing the best of modern menus for all to enjoy.

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