

CHEF JASON VARGO'S NEW MENU SIZZLES



The sound of music wafts from Aqua Prime's patio as patrons nibble apps and sip wine while catching up on what's new in Indian Rocks Beach. Thanks to Aqua Prime's culinary maestro Chef Jason S. Vargo, one of the season's highlights is the new menu, wine list and crafted cocktails. He's been a chef for 24 years and at 38, his passion for food and ingredients drives this stellar new menu. Now owned by Premier Event Hospitality Group, the casual but upscale restaurant is garnering rave reviews—especially the chef.

Chef Jason has a passion for perfection, and his attention to detail shows in his menu. "We're about Sea To Table, with handcut steaks. Being a part of the community and using local vendors for fresh produce and ingredients is the key to my dishes," says Vargo proudly.

SEA TO TABLE MENU

Beautifully plated, the savory dishes are fun and approachable as is the casual chic vibe in both the restaurant and bar, where no one is a stranger. Aqua Prime is a chef-driven restaurant, with Vargo in charge through three sets of owners. "I have put my heart and soul into Aqua Prime. and From decor to menu, I have been apart of all the changes. We've updated the new plates, glassware, candles, fans, the bar, paint, landscaping, the logo menu, and interior décor with new lighting," says Vargo proudly. "I want the experience to be memorable...the ambience, the service and especially the food."

SMOKED FUSION COASTAL CUISINE

The new menu reflects his hands-on approach, creative ideas, locally sourced ingredients and expertise in creating consistently delicious fare that's unique on the beach. "With this menu, we have evolved. One day I saw a opportunity where smoke fusion was lacking on the beach, and came up with the tagline "We are A Smoked Fusion Coastal Cuisine", Just enough smoke to elevate certain dishes to make you want more," says Chef Jason.

Sourcing ingredients is a passion for Chef Vargo. His food is

fried in non-GMO sunflower oil, which he stands by strongly. The diver U-10 sea scallops are fresh from Connecticut. The Norwegian salmon is flown in from Iceland and he uses Wild-Caught North Atlantic cod, a favorite of his.

He recently flew to Wooster OH to check out the test kitchen for his Certified Angus Beef, that he has been using since he opened the restaurant, visiting local farms where they raise the cattle which is held to very high standards. He also uses cage-free brown eggs, heirloom tomatoes and micro-greens . One of his favorite items you'll see on the menu is Wild Red Argentina Red Shrimp that "tastes like baby lobster, with a lovely earthy taste."



Lunch is served 11 am - 3 pm. You can go light with yummy salads like the coconut crusted salmon salad or watermelon goat cheese. Seafood lovers will enjoy the house-smoked local amberjack fish spread, pan-seared scallops in a coconut curry sauce or crispy blue crab cake with the arugula kiwi mango salad.

Spice it up with spit fire wings or smokin' chicken.

The Fish Tacos, Brisket Beach Burger and Smoken' Irma Burrito with truffle mac and cheese will drive you wild. For the purist, order the English-Style Fish & Chips and herb fries or the Tampa Bay Cuban, the best on the beach. The AP Gourmet Burger with smoked sriracha bacon and gorgonzola cheese is hands down a burger for the ages. Add a side of brisket beans and rice or sweet potato waffle fries or save room for dessert, especially the white and dark mousse cake or crème brulee cheesecake.



*"...Chef Jason's
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Photos courtesy of Aqua Prime Seafood & Steaks

DINNER IS SERVED

The Early Special menu from 3 - 5:30 pm for only \$14.50 is a great deal featuring coconut crusted North Atlantic Cod, Smoked Brisket, Local Amberjack, Norwegian Salmon, Chicken Piccata, Wild Red Argentine Shrimp or Certified Angus New York Strip. All come with a choice of side and a biscotti cookie with whipped cream for dessert.

Dinner runs at 3 - 10 pm daily. Some of the same appetizers grace the menu, but best bets include the PEI mussels in a citrus lemon butter sauce, the Pina Colada shrimp, angus beef carpaccio or smoked meatballs. The signature IRB fish and white bean chowder is back, and the Asian inspired ginger and chicken rice soup is stellar. Good luck deciding on the beef, from T-bone to prime rib, filet mignon or Argentinian Coulotte steak. The

meat is perfectly seared and accompanied by creative sauces. The bone-in pork chop is brined in rosemary and herbal teas then chargrilled and served with a port wine gorgonzola fondue. There's lobster, sea bass and yellowfin tuna, but Chef Vargo's grouper and salmon are best of show. Ask for a side of the Signature Dijon garlic cream or smokey red Argentinian chimichurri.

SETTING THE BAR HIGH

With a full liquor bar and friendly mixologists, you can choose signature cocktails, craft beers, domestic or import bottle and the boutique wine list showcases global vineyards both domestic (California, Oregon) and international (New Zealand, Italy, Argentina, Spain). Dessert drinks like the key lime or chocolate martini and afternoon delights like the Ruby Slipper (Deep Eddy grapefruit vodka, St. Germain Elderflower) or Mango Mojito to take the edge off the day. ●



Aqua Prime Seafood & Steaks
213 Gulf Blvd., Indian Rocks Beach
(727) 330-7724 | AquaPrimeFlorida.com
Happy Hour Daily: 11 am – 6 pm
Live Music: 1 pm – 4 pm & 6 pm – 9 pm

