

San Francisco Chronicle



BAR BITES

:: Waterbar :: It's surprising how few options there are for bayside dining in this city by the bay. When Waterbar and its sister restaurant, Epic Roasthouse, opened about a year ago, suddenly there were two glam new choices.

Both restaurants are upscale, but each has a lounge with a creative list of libations as well as bar snacks. At Waterbar, which is ocean-focused both in decor and menu, there are great views from pretty much any seat in the lounge. At night it's the twinkling lights of the Bay Bridge that seem to go right overhead; during the day there's the dazzling bay.

Brick walls and ceilings help create the feeling of a vintage building — despite the fact that it is brand new — and the restaurant's two signature floor-to-ceiling aquariums capture attention.

— Tara Duggan, tduggan@sfgchronicle.com

The vibe: Swanky, yet not too snarky. The dress code varies between folks dressing up and those wearing jeans and boots.

The crowd: A curse of the great views, it's not a local scene, yet the crowd seems comfortably mixed. It's the kind of place where you may see a daughter and her boyfriend gussied up to meet Dad and Mom for drinks before dinner. There might be a pair of girlfriends in their 40s flirting with the bartender, or couples lingering over a cheese plate.

Best seat: As you come in, head toward the high table to your left at the corner of the bar facing the water. In warmer weather, hit the outdoor patio.

Killer app: On the bar menu, two people can fill up with about three plates. Our favorite was Monterey grilled squid (\$16) on top of fat butter beans with chorizo, dribbled with pesto. One tip: If you're seated at a small table, request that your food come out in phases to avoid serious crowding.

Signature drink: The list of both classic and creative cocktails includes the Bayside (\$13), Danrak gin, grapefruit juice and Dimmi, an herb-laced liqueur, served over

the rocks. Josh's 4 O'Clock Shadow (\$12) is a smooth combination of Old Overholt rye, Benedictine, Grand Marnier and lemon juice.

Also on tap: Since you're feeling fancy, it's nice to know there are six sparkling wines by the glass, including a relatively affordable Prosecco di Conegliano (\$9).

Bonus: The restaurant's new happy hour (3 to 6 p.m. weekdays) features \$1 oysters, which are actually offered all day until 6 p.m., and a complimentary \$5 cocktail called Spa in Cabo, with Jose Cuervo Reserva de la Familia Patino Tequila, lime and cucumber.

Vitals: Waterbar, 399 the Embarcadero South, S.F. (415) 284-9922. waterbarsf.com. Lunch 11:30 a.m. - 2 p.m. weekdays, until 3 p.m. weekends; dinner 5:30-10 p.m. Sun.-Thurs., until 10:30 p.m. Fri. and Sat.



Waterbar at the Embarcadero offers bay views as well as, top from left, a choice of oysters, Josh's 4 O'Clock Shadow, grilled squid and a Bayside cocktail.