



ABOVE: SOUS CHEF ALEJANDRO CRUZ
BELOW: PORK DUO (BRAISED PORK BELLY AND HOUSE MADE FENNEL SAUSAGE WITH POLENTA, WILTED GREENS, FENNEL PUREE, MUSTARD SAUCE)

DATE NIGHT DESTINATION

Ox & Fin's stylish, laid-back vibe BY DANTE ZUÑIGA-WEST

If you're looking for a place to take your partner and enjoy a fine meal in a classy atmosphere, Ox & Fin restaurant in Oakway Center, a reincarnation of Osteria Sfizio, is the new hot spot that should be on your radar when date night comes around.

Stylish but with a laidback feel, Ox & Fin is an Italian seafood steakhouse that's California chic (in a good way) with a Pacific Northwest vibe. You can escape here to toss back a few drinks with your coworkers after a hard day on the job or come in for the evening and hide out with your significant other at one of the more private tables.

First things first, the drinks and appetizers are excellent. The drink menu alone presents the wonderful problem of having too much to choose from. We suggest the Euro Sidecar, but it's a tough decision given that seasonal mojitos are also on the docket. Think about it, a blackberry mojito made with fresh local blackberries and tons of mint ... it's pretty hard to turn down. The best move would be bringing that special partner of yours and getting both, so you can sample either cocktail — and that's if you two are cocktail people. At Ox & Fin the flow of beer is also abundant.

"We have a tap from each local brewery," server Will Prull says. "And lots of local Northwest wines."

It's not just the drinks that are local. The menu boasts a virtual smorgasbord of locally grown produce and locally farmed meat. "We're big into supporting local culture and local farmers," Prull says.

When it comes to appetizers, don't overlook the fried hazelnuts with alder-smoked sea salt. The marinated olives with chili, garlic and thyme are pretty scrumptious as well. Salad lovers will be pleased to encounter the butterleaf salad with avocado, grapefruit and tarragon dressing, while seafood fans should look to enjoy the oysters on the half-shell.

If it's beginning to sound like Ox & Fin has a brutally extensive selection of excellent food and drink to choose from, wait until you are confronted by the dinner options. The fennel sausage rigatoni soaked in tomato cream sauce is a solid bet, as is the Ox & Fin Burger. Carnivorous folks will find no shortage of love on the main course menu; rib-eye steak (with option of adding a fried egg), hanger steak in béarnaise sauce and a short ribs plate await those with that tangy taste for meaty delights.

Partnership is something that should be celebrated with good food, strong drink and, of course, dessert. The seasonal house desserts at Ox & Fin are enough to destroy anyone's workout diet or abstinence from sugar. Our top pick is the lemon curd tartlet with raspberry coulis. And the doughnuts — trust us on that last one, they really are that good. ■

Find the restaurant at oxandfin.com and on Facebook.



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