

# Castaway's Seafood Grille

This Long Beach eatery serves up tiki drinks, seafood aplenty, and extra toppings

Since taking over as the Mouth, I can't tell you how many times I've taken a box of French fries home in a to-go box only to later move them to the compost.

This graveyard of fries speaks to a certain tradition, particularly when it comes to feeding hungry tourists: Above all, make sure they are full. Thou shalt provide the starches.

Castaway's Seafood Grille in Long Beach also makes sure you get full. But the filler I got was a little different, and a cut or two above fry mountain. It came in three forms: cheese, spinach and bacon. Not bad, eh?

Almost down the middle, Castaway's is divided between a family dining room and a loosely-styled tiki bar. I found the bar side infinitely more warm and welcoming than the family room, with its flat lighting, voluminous blue vinyl booths and wrote oceanic decor.

As it was a tiki bar, my companion and I began with cocktails. On the recommendation of the bubbly, gregarious and well-styled server/bartender, I opted for the Mai Thai. My companion went with the Margarita. When the drinks arrived it was obvious — a bit of information had been left out. The drinks were enormous doubles. A pleasant surprise, indeed.

The Mai Thai (\$9), served in a heavy glass beer mug, was sweet and strong, though it needed a little extra stirring as all the rum was on top. The Margarita (\$9) was leavened with enough tart lime against the syrup.

Now, something I probably should've mentioned before: There are two restaurants on the North Coast claiming the Castaway moniker. There's Castaways Restaurant & Tiki Bar in Cannon Beach (one of my top picks of 2015) and Castaway's Seafood Grille in Long Beach (which we're speaking about now). Though they prefer different punctuation, each are tangential tiki bars and seafood forward. But the restaurants are separately owned and inspired. Besides the name and penchant for fruity, sugary cocktails, they have nothing in common.

Well, almost nothing. Both serve coconut shrimp. And, as it's a flavor that's stuck with me since devouring them in Cannon Beach, I thought I'd give them a shot in Long Beach. The differences were apparent when they hit the table. The eight Coconut Shrimp (\$9.99) in Long Beach were butterflyed. As such, the surface area of the shrimp is doubled and the ratio of breading to

meat goes way up. The breading at Castaway's in Long Beach included as much — or more — Panko bread crumbs than coconut. (In Cannon Beach, it's all coconut.) Still, the shrimp in Long Beach were well cooked, crispy and, after dipping them in a generic chili sauce, we finished them all.

Anyway, that's enough comparison. As I said, these are truly different restaurants. Where Cannon Beach explores fusion from a base of Cajun/Creole, Long Beach delights in, well, extra toppings.

The Clam Chowder (\$4.49 per cup or \$6.49 for a bowl) was bacon forward. Smoky and plentiful, it made the clam and potato chowder more surf and turf.

Along with bacon, spinach and cheese were dominant components of the Oysters Rockefeller (\$10.99). Served on the half shell after being baked underneath a heaping of spinach, onions, garlic, Parmesan cheese and, yes, bacon, the oys-



The Halibut Po Boy teemed with sweet pineapple, sharp pico de gallo, and creamy and spicy aioli.

ters were as much a supporting character than the dish's star. The large shells overflowed. Rather than a nibbling, slurping delicacy, these were Oysters Rockefeller on steroids — almost a meal in themselves. And while my companion and I enjoyed this hearty variation, we took issue with the presentation.

The oyster shells were placed on a thick bed of spinach. And after all the loads of sopping spinach that were already cooked into the dish, there was absolutely no need for more, garnish or otherwise. So, just as it came, our plate left the table with all the extra produce. Essentially it went from the fridge into the trash. There's no need for such waste.

The Halibut Po Boy (\$13.99) was also teem-

ing, but more thoughtfully. On top of an extra-large, soft, white bread hoagie roll/hot dog bun, the whitefish was tender, clean and lightly grilled. It cupped an abundance of pineapple pico de gallo — with tomato, onion, and cilantro — as well as a cole slaw, lettuce and a chipotle aioli. The sandwich seemed almost impossible to fold closed, and doing so cause finger-licking collateral damage.

Each bite contained multitudes: the bright, sweet pineapple; the sharp pico; the smooth, creamy and quite spicy aioli. It made you want to keep going back, biting in as the toppings spilled out the sides. The sandwich came with the selection of fries — regular, tots, sweet potato or garlic. I went with the Parmesan-covered garlic fries, which were potent and plentiful enough to send Dracula out of state. (I would've, however, liked to have known about the \$2 up-charge beforehand, since it was offered as a choice.)

We finished with the Seafood Ravioli (\$19.99). It arrived much larger than expected, about the size of a brick. It was smothered in Parmesan (again) and a rich cream sauce, accompanied by enough garlic bread to sop it all up. A generous sprinkling of parsley helped the seafood stand out. And among the smorgasbord of crab, cod, bay shrimp and ricotta, the layered pasta held up. Well cooked, it remained supple against the dripping, gooey innards.

After all this food, that the ravioli was a favorite for both my companion and I is saying something. I suppose that's because while the filler wasn't necessarily the most nuanced, it was pretty killer. And it wasn't starch.

## mouth OF THE COLUMBIA

COAST WEEKEND'S LOCAL RESTAURANT REVIEW

Story and photos by THE MOUTH OF THE COLUMBIA • [mouth@coastweekend.com](mailto:mouth@coastweekend.com)

### Castaway's Seafood Grille

Rating: ★ ★ ★ ☆

208 Pacific Ave.  
Long Beach, Washington  
360-642-4745

**HOURS:** 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily

**PRICE:** \$\$ – entrées from \$10 to \$25

**SERVICE:** Bright and chipper

**VEGETARIAN / VEGAN OPTIONS:** A mushroom burger and salads

**DRINKS:** Full bar, soda, coffee, tea, juice, smoothies

#### KEY TO RATINGS

- ★ poor
- ★★ below average
- ★★★ good & worth returning
- ★★★★ excellent
- ★★★★★ outstanding, the best in the Columbia-Pacific region