

Nautilus Tavern brings laid-back, time-tested fare to Windansea



The several choices of dry rubs and sauces set apart Nautilus' poultry. Best paired with a cold beverage.

Residents and those driving along La Jolla Boulevard may have noticed a new restaurant in place of the former La Jolla Tap and Grill, which closed in January of 2017. Now fully revamped as Nautilus Tavern, the restaurant and bar has been open since October. What truly sets the new locale apart from the crowd is its food, which executive chef and partner Shelly Velez has been perfecting on her own and in area restaurants throughout her career.

"I was out at Pillbox Tavern in Solana Beach, when the owners approached me about helping them open a 'sister' restaurant. That was last January," says Velez. "Since October, we have

gotten everything in the kitchen dialed in. Our recipes, timing, daily and monthly specials, and overall attitude have really come together.”

Suffice it to say Velez, who also spent years as executive chef of Guava Beach in Mission Beach, is more than comfortable fulfilling coastal cravings. For this reason, Nautilus Tavern indefinitely fills the void of neighborhood watering holes and comforting bites in the Windansea area.

Velez’s menu runs the gamut, but she admits that it is much more seafood-forward than Pillbox. Notable appetizer items include chicken egg rolls (\$12), marinated beef tips with grilled mushrooms and onions (\$14) and crispy calamari (\$13). Those looking for a healthier lunch option should not fret, for their BBQ chicken salad (\$14) is out of this world.

In such close proximity to area businesses, it only makes sense to have some stellar sandwiches on queue as well. Velez says The seared ahi sandwich (\$14) has been a popular item, as well as the smoked Cubano (\$14) and Windansea burger (\$13). It should be noted that nearly all sandwiches, or items that may contain gluten, can be prepared as gluten-free options as well.

Nautilus Tavern also offers breakfast on Saturdays and Sundays, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Not to be overlooked is their extensive beer and wine list, as well as craft cocktails. Nautilus’ proverbial happy hour is actually three, held from 3 to 6 p.m. daily, with \$2 off beer, wine or cocktails.

Perhaps one thing Velez has perfected in her years of purveying her own barbecue sauce (Miss Shelly’s sauce) is time-honored bar tradition, chicken wings. From Old Bay seasoned poultry, classic buffalo, or Shelly’s Cali Style BBQ, one cannot go wrong with this classic.

“I’m enjoying getting to learn more about La Jolla,” said Velez. “Since everything is running so smoothly, it allows time for me to really perfect our recipes, as well as dream up new ways to promote our deals. I’d really like to have a packaged-lunch type deal for those who work in the area, and may not have the time to sit and eat in a restaurant.”

“Also, we will be hosting a Super Bowl party on Feb. 4 with a hosted nacho bar, ‘good old-fashioned barbecue,’ jungle juice, Jell-O shots and buckets of beer,” Velez concluded.

That sounds like a party.

WHERE: 6830 La Jolla Blvd Ste.103.

WHEN: 11 a.m. to midnight, daily.

CONTACT: nautilustavern.com; 858-750-2056.