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BALTAIRE RAISES THE
STEAKS IN BRENTWOOD

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HIGH STEAKS

WITH BALTAIRE, BRENTWOOD
FINALLY GETS THE STEAKHOUSE
IT DESERVES.

By Lesley Balla
Photography by Dylan + Jeni

Brentwood has always teemed with Italian restaurants and casual cafes, but when posed with the question, “Where should we eat steak?” I’d always answer, “Beverly Hills.” No longer. With its crisp linen-topped tables, choice pieces of meat and dapper servers rushing around the sleek dining room, Baltaire is the restaurant the tony Westside neighborhood always needed.

Steakhouses can often fall into the trap of being one-note. There are martinis and plenty of mahogany; big salads and oyster platters; various cuts of beef, pork and lamb; and a little something for vegetarians for good measure. Baltaire has all of the above, it also serves up considerably more style than a typical steakhouse.

The room is pretty sexy, for one. With fashionable people filling every leather bar stool, low-slung sofa and Eames-style chair, it’s a far cry from the Cheesecake Factory that was formerly located there. The aesthetic is more midcentury modern than machismo, which is where most meat-centric restaurants veer, with pretty green and gray fabrics, brass accents and skylights in the dining room. Fruit trees and a fireplace flank the terrace, and when the roof cover is pulled back, sunbeams and warm breezes fill the space during



CLASSIC COOL
Clockwise from top: Baltaire’s interior embodies an old-school steakhouse with a modern twist; a Greek salad—made of romaine lettuce, olives, tomatoes, feta and a mustard vinaigrette—is prepared tableside; the bone-in rib-eye is basted in beef tallow rather than butter, making it extra flavorful and decadent.



the day. At night, music from a baby grand piano sweeps throughout the space.

Front-of-the-house veterans like General Manger Hardeep Birdi, who’s been everywhere from Bottega Louie downtown to Fig & Olive in West Hollywood, along with several Michael Mina restaurants around the country, ensure everyone’s comfortable, whether it’s for a casual drop-in at the bar for a house-specialty julep or for a full-spread dinner. Regular L.A. diners might recognize Beverage Director David Vaughn, who worked at The Wine House and then as beverage director at Osteria Mozza. He’ll make sure you have the right wine with every bite, from the bubbly blanc de blancs with caviar to the earthy syrah for that dry-aged steak.



STEPPING IT UP
Clockwise from top left: Organic Scottish salmon is served with a creamy English pea risotto and citrus beurre blanc; the restaurant's patio is perfect for dining alfresco; the bourbon croissant bread pudding topped with Chantilly cream and a caramel drizzle sits in a pool of creme anglaise.



I used to joke that I choose a steakhouse based on side dishes: Who has the best whipped potatoes, creamed spinach, and macaroni and cheese? Because on the surface, every steakhouse has great steak. Mastro's has lobster mashed potatoes; Wolfgang's is known for its German potatoes; and Cut has its Yukon Gold potato puree and creamed morel mushrooms. Executive Chef Travis Strickland's spiral macaroni and cheese will probably have me going back to Baltaire more than a few times. It practically overflows from its silver bowl, covered in crunchy, buttery brown bits. This, a glass of wine and a crisp root vegetable salad could easily be dinner.

Of course, there's so much more to a great steakhouse than mere accoutrements. It's the meat: Where it's from; how it's cooked; how long it's aged. Strickland doesn't offer more than what's necessary, which is a nice change of pace; that way it's easy to decide between cuts. Personally, I almost always opt for a juicy rib-eye, and here it's wonderfully rich and flavorful. The trick is basting it in dry-aged beef tallow instead of butter, as many steakhouses do. The velvety A5 wagyu steak, the highest grade of the prized Japanese beef, is perfect in small doses (the portion is only about 4 ounces). On the opposite end, the porterhouse or dry-aged cote de boeuf is great to share. Any dish can be upgraded with creamy crab Oscar, blue cheese fondue or the house steak sauce.

A lot of tableside presentations add flair to the meal. We've all heard of Caesar salads being tossed in the middle of the dining room, but here it's a Greek salad—olive oil and vinegar, some mustard and feta cheese, chopped romaine lettuce, olives and tomatoes. A whole roasted lobster tail is brought out per order, removed from the shell and sliced for each plate, and a Dover sole is also deboned and served from a cart. The tuna poke, diver scallops and an ice plateau brimming with chilled plump jumbo shrimp, crab claws and oysters are all great starters.

Bread pudding always sounds so heavy after a big meal, but here, made with buttery croissants, it's light, sweet and delicious. Be sure to get the matcha tea service after. With tea as another passion, Vaughn himself whisks the Japanese green powder to a smooth and lovely froth at the table. It's a lovely little ceremony to end the meal.

There are so many ways Baltaire is filling Brentwood's steakhouse needs, and it goes way beyond the wagyu and Greek salad. It's also bridging the gap between being a straightforward, meat-centric restaurant and a neighborhood stomping ground, with enough to pull people in from both east and west of the 405. It's even worth fighting traffic on the 405 for a night here—and that says a lot. ▲

Where to Sit

Follow your mood: fireside drinks on the patio, a sofa table near the glass wall looking into the kitchen, or a spot at the bar.

Lunch and Brunch

There are some lovely salads on the lunch menu, plus a gorgeous lobster grilled cheese and a wonderful burger. The patio was made for weekend brunch.

What to Drink

They'll make a julep with any spirit. The gin julep has parsley instead of mint, adding a fresh, savory note to the cocktail.



Baltaire

11647 San Vicente Blvd., L.A.,
424.273.1660, baltaire.com

Hours: Sun., 10AM-11PM; Mon.-Thu., 11AM-11PM;
Fri., 11AM-midnight; Sat., 10AM-midnight

Prices: Appetizers: \$14-\$19; shellfish: \$18-\$34;
salads and soups, \$12-\$18; entrees, \$24-\$48;
steaks, \$42-\$145; sides, \$10; desserts, \$12;
cocktails, \$15