

ARIZONA VINES & WINES



TOUR WINE COUNTRY

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FEATURED WINERY - *Freitas Vineyard*

Display until March 2012

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WINTER 2011

RUBEE'S RESTAURANT SPOTLIGHT...

ARROWHEAD GRILL

A NEIGHBORHOOD CUT ABOVE THE REST

ARTICLE BY CHRISTINA BARRUETA / PHOTOS BY MICHELL JONAS PHOTOGRAPHY

Living in Northwest Phoenix, I'm always on the lookout for great independent or chef-owned restaurants on this side of the valley. Chef Charles Wade Schwerd's unpretentious steakhouse is a favorite and I've been a fan ever since it opened its doors in 2008. The high-quality prime steaks are expertly prepared and that's no surprise with Chef Schwerd's background, from family heritage (his father owned a meatpacking business), to two decades of experience including stints at Ruth's Chris and as executive chef at Mastro's.

Of course, the hand-cut aged steaks at Arrowhead Grill take center stage, arriving sizzling on their hot plates with a well-seasoned toasty crust glistening with maitre d'hôtel butter. Filet mignon, the little worked and most tender muscle, is offered on the menu in 8 or 11 oz. cuts, wrapped in bacon or, my favorite, as a 13 oz. bone-in filet for even more flavor. Well-marbled rib eyes, juicy strip steaks, rosy rare prime rib, elegant rack of lamb and a fat 48 oz. porterhouse for those hearty eaters are some of the classic steakhouse choices. Individualize your dish by topping it with crumbled blue cheese or encrusting with gorgonzola, or perhaps add a side of cognac-peppercorn or béarnaise, the time-honored white wine and tarragon sauce. However, I simply can't resist the beefy richness of the signature 10 oz. Delmonico. Made famous by Chef Ranhofer of Delmonico's in New York City, Chef Schwerd has perfected this historical steak based on Ranhofer's specifications in his 1894 book "The Epicurean." It's delicious as is, but

crowning it with the addition of garlicky shrimp scampi elevates it to a new level, with every bite of superb beef complemented by succulent shrimp.



Chef Schwerd also has a way with impeccable seafood. All entrees can be ordered Oscar style, adorned with a crab cake, asparagus and béarnaise. The colossal shrimp cocktail with cocktail sauce or rémoulade is a steakhouse staple, as are briny Kumamoto oysters on a bed of ice with a ramekin of tangy verjus mignonette. You will find king crab legs and lobster, and main courses such as fresh swordfish, wild salmon or halibut that will



satisfy any seafood aficionado. On one visit, I had asked for an accompanying side of miso buerre blanc to accompany my sea bass. However, I found that prepared at chef's suggestion and simply finished with white wine and butter, this silken filler needed no further adornment.

Those with a penchant for a steakhouse salad will find six options to choose from, including spinach salad with bacon and warm red wine vinaigrette and, of course, the timeless blue cheese-embellished wedge of crisp iceberg. While a wonderful French onion soup with a bubbly drape of melted Gruyère is a fitting start to a steakhouse feast, being a New England transplant, I was happy to find a satisfying cream-based chowder full of sweet clams and potatoes.

Almost 30 sides round out the menu with more than the usual options. Appease your veggie craving with crispy green beans or earthy sautéed mushrooms with sweet caramelized

onions, and your carb craving with vegetable risotto, scalloped potatoes, or AG hash browns. Can't decide between the french fries, Krinkle Cut, or sweet potato fries? Order the Fry Trio, which delivers all three along with accompanying sauces. If you explore beyond classic steakhouse options, think prosciutto-wrapped asparagus, cheesy grits, decadent lobster mashed potatoes, or macaroni and cheese livened up with Hatch green chiles with Monterrey jack and cheddar.

If you wish to end the night on a sweet note, perhaps order a classic crème brulee or rich warm flourless chocolate cake, although I find myself drawn to the warm homestyle chocolate chip cookie, perfect for one, (which can be ordered crispy or gooey) topped with vanilla bean ice cream. On the other end of the spectrum, if your companions are willing to share, it's hard to pass up the signature buttercake baked as a whimsical cupcake with strawberry frosting. Sitting in a decorative pool of crème anglais and strawberry coulis, it's enough for the whole table to indulge in.

I'd be remiss if I failed to mention the not-your-average steakhouse bar menu. In addition to steak and seafood, you'll find applewood-smoked pork ribs, savory chicken tacos, a shaved prime rib sandwich with au jus and horseradish, and one of the best burgers in town, made from fresh-ground beef using trimmings from the prime filet. On more than one occasion, I've sat at the comfortable bar and ordered the same duo for my dinner: I start with a warm fondue of Arizona Black Mesa Ranch goat cheese and rosemary into which I dip herb-crusted grilled lamb chops, and then happily polish off



the shrimp and grits side as my main. A cast-iron skillet of cheesy grits enhanced with onion and bacon, flecked with chives, and topped with buttery shrimp, is both humble and luxurious.

Arrowhead Grill also boasts a well-thought-out wine

list to pair with the menu along with a wide variety to appeal to all wine enthusiasts. I also appreciate the knowledgeable suggestions. On a recent visit, my companion and I enjoyed a glass of Sequoia Grove Chardonnay that was lovely with our seafood dishes, while a Kracher Beerenauaslese was just as wonderful paired with dessert.

Arrowhead Grill is a neighborhood destination deserving of its loyal following. It's the type of place where you can splurge on an upscale surf and turf feast coupled with creamed spinach and Lyonnaise potatoes, or a comfort food dinner of wood-fired roast chicken carved tableside with sides of hominy and bacon, maple mashed sweet potatoes and creamed corn. I've brought out of town guests, celebrated special occasions and spent many a sunny afternoon enjoying Happy Hour at the bar. Lucky us to have a spot like Arrowhead Grill here in the West Valley.



Arrowhead Grill

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www.ArrowheadGrill.com

11AM-10PM Sunday - Thursday
11AM - 11PM Friday & Saturday

Christina Barrueta is an avid Chowhound, passionate about food, wine and spirits. A transplant from Boston, she loves finding new locations to whet her appetite. You may follow her as Rubee on Chowhound.com or @Rubee100 on Twitter.