



Photographs by Luis Garcia Photographs

Chef Thomas Ryan sauces up a dish in Pelican Grill's open kitchen.

## Walk right up and say hello to the chef

**W**ITH the success of shows like "Hell's Kitchen" and "Iron Chef," it's no wonder the kitchen has now become center stage. At the newly opened Pelican Grill on the Newport coast, exec chef Thomas Ryan and his culinary team are the star attractions as they work in the restaurant's open kitchen.

From the fire grills and olive wood-burning oven to the desert station, diners can watch the vibrant goings on as their meal is prepared. "No, there's definitely no tantrums," says Ryan with a laugh. "We love having people stop by and talk to us. It really adds to the dining experience."

The congenial chef, a former executive chef for the Ritz-Carlton group, has crafted a bold but simple menu filled with staple classics like steak, seafood, pizza and pasta infused with local fresh ingredients. "I call it California lifestyle cul-



Ryan calls the dishes "California lifestyle cuisine."

sine," he says.

Menu items include chilled Californian artichoke with fresh herb mayonnaise, fennel sausage pizza, pistachio-crustedahi tuna steak, bourbon-brined skirt steak and Ryan's signature dish, the boneless short ribs of beef — made with natural Brandt Beef from Brawley, Calif., and served in individual cast-iron Staub dishes. "We are keeping it simple and fresh for now, but we've just started," says Ryan. "I'm sure in the future I will be adding a lot more different and unique dishes."

The Pelican Grill is perched high on the famed Pelican Hill

Golf Club and Resort. Renovations have kept the 504-acre property closed for the last two years, but the golf course and freshly constructed clubhouse featuring the Grill have now opened. The rest of the resort will catch up next fall.

The restaurant is grand and opulent with its Palladian-style architecture, deep booths, high ceilings, Venetian plaster, fireplaces and rustic urns. Its large arching windows overlook the golf course, the properties' olive grove and the Pacific — offering a glimpse of Catalina Island on a clear day. The expansive outdoor terrace with its hanging flower baskets is discreetly climate-controlled with heated floors and ceilings, so alfresco dining is available any time of year.

"It really is a spectacular place to dine," says Ryan.

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