

Dine / Rumari



Clockwise from top left: halibut piccata; the interior at Rumari; one of the restaurant's many wine offerings to pair with the food; the Limoncello Drop (back) and Naxos Island Greek salad



European Eats

AT THE REIMAGINED RUMARI, YOU DON'T HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN ITALIAN AND GREEK FAVORITES.

By ASHLEY RYAN

When jet setting off to Europe, there are quite a few questions to consider, but one of the biggest is, “Where should we go?” Paris, the romantic city of lights? Ibiza, Spain, for the beaches and nightlife? Berlin, an architectural hot spot? But two destinations that are sure to capture any travelers’ attention are Italy and Greece. Both known for their rich culture, historical importance and jaw-dropping scenery, each of these countries have been cemented as places that you simply must have stamped in your passport.

Though you may not be able to pack your bags and hop on a plane right now, you

can venture down to the newly reimagined Rumari to enjoy these beloved European cuisines. Now owned by local restaurateur Ivan Spiers, who is also responsible for Laguna eateries like Mozambique, Skyloft and the former Laguna Fish Co. (which is currently transitioning to Bodega Laguna), Rumari, which reopened in May with updated furniture and decor, offers the best of both worlds, with one chef crafting Italian favorites and another creating Greek classics.

Grab a drink to start: You can’t go wrong with the Italian-inspired Limoncello Drop or the Sicilian mule, crafted with Aperol—though those looking to stick on the Greek



side of things will enjoy the West of Corfu or Masitha Sour cocktails, both made with Greek liqueurs. An extensive wine menu with options from both countries and beyond is also available for pairing.

While sticking with one type of cuisine is always an option, we suggest mixing and matching to your heart’s content. Those looking for light bites will rejoice over the flavorful caprese salad, which combines vine-ripened tomatoes, thick chunks of mozzarella and fresh basil, all drizzled in olive oil and a balsamic glaze. Another light appetizer is the Naxos Island Greek salad, with cucumber, tomato, kalamata olives, red onion, green peppers and a slab of herbed feta in a red wine vinaigrette. For something heartier, try the bruschetta or Greek meze sampler plate.

For the main course, Italian pastas abound, from spaghetti lobster carbonara or a north Italian bucatini Bolognese to the Chef’s Rotelle, house-made noodles topped with marinara and creamy Alfredo. But you can’t skip the linguine fra diavolo, in which the two chefs work together to create a masterpiece of flavor. The linguine, smothered in cream and a Calabrian chile sauce, is topped with two large, juicy shrimp.

Elsewhere, you can try other Italian specialties like the bistecca alla Fiorentina, a bone-in rib-eye seared in herb butter, or the veal piccata, sautéed in lemon. But the Greek entrees are really captivating, like the souvlakia, featuring traditional marinated skewers in your choice of beef or chicken that are flame-grilled then served with tomato, cucumber, onion, mint, tzatziki sauce and pita bread. Another option, Papou’s Moussaka, is a Greek family favorite, layering oven-roasted eggplant, potato and zucchini with meat sauce before it’s topped with Parmesan and savory bechamel sauce.

And just a tip: If you want dessert, order a souffle while you dine so that it’s ready for you to indulge once your meal is finished—if you still have room to eat it. ■

RUMARI: 1826 S. Coast Highway; 949-494-0400; rumarioc.com
HOURS: 5-9:30 p.m. Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday; 5-10 p.m. Friday and Saturday; 3-5 p.m. happy hour Wednesday through Sunday; closed Monday and Tuesday

COCKTAILS PHOTO: ASHLEY RYAN; ALL OTHERS ON SPREAD: SHARON WILLIAMS