

FOOD+DRINK

THE INLAND EMPIRE'S ULTIMATE DINING RESOURCE

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Bill Blackburn, chef-owner of Blackburn's Farm to Table in Corona, has owned a catering business for 15 years and is a private chef for three major league baseball players. He is also the chef for the Rancho Cucamonga Quakes during baseball season.

PHOTO: TRINA GONZALEZ



Left: Seared ahi stack. **Above:** Lobster ravioli in a sundried tomato and pesto sauce. **Below:** Herb-roasted wild salmon with a Moroccan spice sauce.



GOOD TASTES

Fresh Take

Blackburn's Farm to Table in Corona lives up to its name and its commitment to wholesome food.

WRITTEN BY **DAVID COHEN** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **TRINA GONZALEZ**

It may not be quantifiable, but eating grass-fed meats which are free of antibiotics, steroids and hormones, in tandem with organic, pesticide-free vegetables, always makes me feel better, not to mention the food tastes better.

That is also the credo of Bill Blackburn, chef-owner of Blackburn's Farm to Table in Corona. He also believes in using sustainable seafood. Such foods are usually more expensive than the mass-produced variety, but it's a small price to pay when you know that what you're ingesting is natural, without preservatives and other additives.

So, how does the food actually taste? Glad you asked. The New Zealand petite lamb chop appetizer with a mint pesto dipping sauce was served atop a bed of purple kale garnished with edible flowers. The chops were hardly petite—meaty with a thin layer of fat. They were cooked perfectly medium rare and were as succulent as could be.

The herb-roasted wild salmon was luscious, served with a Moroccan spice sauce. Harissa or a chermoula sauce would go equally well with the full-bodied fish, which was satiny in texture and goes perfectly with pinot noir.

The side of Asian slaw with peanut sauce and a touch of sesame oil was outstanding.

The lobster-stuffed ravioli contained pieces of lobster meat in addition to the finely chopped filling, and was bathed in a robust sun-dried tomato bechamel sauce with pesto. Five large ravioli were accompanied by green beans that tasted like they had just been pulled from the garden.

A horizontal seared ahi stack arrived on a bed of organic mixed greens along with a pineapple salsa and a rather tame wasabi aioli—impeccably fresh fish that was plentiful enough to serve as a light entree.

The grass-fed pastrami “stack” would not remind anyone of a Carnegie Deli size sandwich, but the pastrami was extraordinarily lean and bursting with flavor. Sauerkraut and melted Swiss cheese were layered on top. You have a choice of multi-grain or sourdough bread.

Don't miss the one pound center cut Duroc pork chop with caramelized peaches and truffle mashed potatoes, a bargain at \$18.95!

Desserts were good enough to begin the meal. The

FRESH TAKE

continued

tiramisu with its chocolate-vanilla swirl and white chocolate sauce was very good, with streaks of passion fruit sauce. The pear galette with its luscious crust, perfectly cooked pears and sinful almond cream filling disappeared in nothing flat.

From the small plate side of the menu, there are a number of flatbreads from which to choose, as well as Thai chicken sate with a ginger sesame dipping sauce and skillet shrimp scampi.

In summary, the ambiance is very informal, the service cordial and professional, and the food is artfully presented and impeccably fresh and delicious. It's called modern comfort food—it's that and so much more.

Snapshot: Blackburn's Farm to Table, 4300 Green River Road, Unit 106, Corona; (951) 264-6807, blackburnsfarmtotable.com



Pear Galette (above) is offered when pears are in season. Below: tiramisu.



Kim Peeples pours a sample of Jack's Choice Irish Single Malt Whiskey at Vom Fass in Claremont.

PHOTO: JIM DORSEY

TRENDS

Well Oiled

Foodies delight in the unique offerings at Claremont's Vom Fass.

Once she figured out what "Vom Fass" meant, Claremont's Kim Peeples was keen to set up shop selling gourmet oils, vinegars, liqueurs, wines and whiskeys for the German specialty grocery franchise. The name "Vom Fass" means "From the Cask" and refers to the practice of selling products from a barrel or other dispenser in the amount desired by the customer.

"The name was a little funny, but I knew I wanted to get out of corporate America and run my own business," says Peeples, who spent 23 years with

Home Shopping Network. "The minute I tried the products, I was hooked!"

Her accounting background stood her in good stead as a business owner. She and co-owner Denise Solis found Claremont the "perfect town" for gourmet groceries and culinary adventures, given that many residents have traveled extensively and cherish artisan products.

"We want to make sure we are unique," Peeples says, by offering products shoppers won't find down the street or even across town. Besides its core "cask" products, Vom Fass

also carries a selection of spices, spreads and accompaniments.

The craft cocktail craze has been a boon for Peeples, with shoppers searching for unusual liqueurs and spirits and wanting to discuss the merits of various types of Scotch. Vom Fass seeks out small, family-owned distilleries and artisan producers for its products, and wines are hand-selected from boutique wineries. —*Jeanne Boyer*

Snapshot: Vom Fass, 101 N. Indian Hill Blvd., Claremont; (909) 399-0256, vomfassclaremont.com