



Celebrating 20 Years: The Enduring Elegance of AQUA by El Gaucho

Seattle, WA – August 1, 2020 – For 20 years, AQUA by El Gaucho has been the setting for birthdays, anniversaries and many other of life’s celebrations. Throughout August, Seattle’s waterfront dining gem will mark this milestone with a special menu, and recognize the careers of general manager, Sivi Mennen and pianist, Ben Fleck, who have been part of AQUA since opening night.

“As we celebrate the 20th anniversary during a challenging time, we reflect on the endurance of this community and our dedicated AQUA team, as well as the beauty and history of our home on the 50-yard line of Seattle’s waterfront,” said Chad Mackay, CEO, Fire & Vine Hospitality.

Pier 70 has stood at the north end of Seattle’s historic waterfront for 98 years and has continued to evolve and endure through dramatic events and changes. It began as a port of call and warehouse for ships carrying cargo from around the world. It survived a fire in 1916, as well as the drama of housing an MTV reality show, *The Real World*, in 1999 before eventually becoming home to AQUA by El Gaucho in May 2000.

When founder Paul Mackay decided to open a seafood-focused companion restaurant to the El Gaucho steakhouse, he wanted to create a stunning environment to showcase the beauty and bounty of the region. He says that his favorite thing about AQUA is “the beautiful design, but also the feeling that it gives you. It is the perfect way to showcase Seattle to people visiting from around the world. It doesn’t belong to me. It belongs to Seattle.”

When it opened as Waterfront Seafood Grill, it dazzled with walls of glass to frame views of Elliott Bay, the Olympic Mountains, Mt. Rainier and the Space Needle. The restaurant was rebranded to AQUA by El Gaucho in 2011 to reflect the synergy between the two.

Then and now, the Puget Sound serves as both the backdrop and the inspiration for the menu at AQUA. To celebrate the 20th anniversary, chef Kevin Benner has created a [special menu](#) available in August which features original dishes including poached Alaskan halibut stuffed with basil shrimp mousseline, sautéed spinach, citrus beurre blanc and a Tiki banana split for dessert. One-time AQUA general manager, Chris Sparkman, now winemaker of Sparkman Cellars, created an exceptional Chardonnay to toast the 20th anniversary.

Reveling and celebrating the lives of each guest is what makes AQUA truly special. As one guest described, “We don’t come just for the food you know, we come here to get our souls fed.” The dedicated and diverse team has fostered the legacy of exceptional service throughout the years and serves each guest with care and created strong bonds with the community as they welcome families back for milestones and traditions, as well as serving lunch each month at Seattle’s Union Gospel Mission.

On reflecting over her 20 years at AQUA, Sivi Mennen says her fondest memories all surround people. “The people I have met, the visionaries that I have worked for, and those that I am blessed to work alongside and learn from each day. I think that what sets AQUA apart, and what keeps us special, is really simple: love. We love each other, our guests, our vendors, and our industry. In these times especially, we all need it.”

AQUA by El Gaucho Overview

Sivi Mennen, General Manager
Kevin Benner, Executive Chef

Web site: www.elgaucho.com/dine/aqua

Opening Date: May 2000 as Waterfront Seafood Grill. The name changed to AQUA by El Gaucho in 2011.

Location:

- 2801 Alaskan Way, the tip of Pier 70, on the Seattle waterfront
- Just west of the Edgewater Hotel, next to Seattle Art Museum’s Outdoor Sculpture Park

Size:

- 10,000 square feet
- Total occupancy 350
 - Dining Room seats 230-260
 - Lounge seats 50
 - The North Bay Room accommodates 60 – 75
 - The South Bay Room accommodates 16
- Outdoor Patio
 - Patio Dining seats 100
 - Patio lounge seats 60

Cuisine:

The menu features fresh seafood selections and 28-day dry-aged Niman Ranch All-Natural Prime Certified Angus Beef® and custom-aged Certified Angus Beef® Tenderloin Filets as personally selected by John Tarpoff. Steaks and chops are prepared on a one-of-a-kind charcoal grill in an open exhibition style kitchen.

Décor:

AQUA is decorated in blues and greens, with an ocean theme prevalent throughout the restaurant. The dining room is light, open, and airy.

- Walls of glass showcase some of Seattle's finest views of Elliott Bay, Magnolia Bluff, and the Space Needle.
- Signature copper “Artichoke” lights hang from the ceiling.
- Tables are set with crisp, white linens, accented by blue and green tableware.
- The lighted wave bar changes hues of marine blue.

Entertainment: AQUA features live music performed Tuesday through Saturday evenings by renowned Northwest pianist Ben Fleck.

About Fire & Vine Hospitality

The Fire & Vine Hospitality team provides operational leadership, culinary expertise and product sourcing, marketing and technology support for some of the Pacific Northwest’s most iconic hotels and restaurants including El Gaucho Seattle, Bellevue, Tacoma, Portland and Vancouver, AQUA by El Gaucho, Eritage Resort and Aperlume, located steps from Seattle’s Pike Place Market. The Revelers Club is the industry’s most generous rewards program designed to reward and honor our guest’s loyalty and provide benefits at each Fire & Vine property, as well as Walla Walla Steak Co. and Crossbuck Brewing. Free to join, the Revelers Club shares birthday and anniversary gifts at each level of the program and members receive points for every dollar spent.

Each Fire & Vine Hospitality property is unique to the community it serves but all share the following attributes.

- Service – We provide every guest with a unique, unparalleled experience. We revel in celebrating lives.
- Quality - Our mission is to source the best in the world for our guests to enjoy.
- Community – Building a strong community through financial giving and sharing time and resources is a core company value.

###

Media Contact:

Beth Herrell Silverberg
Public Relations Director

Fire & Vine Hospitality

206-679-5157

beth@fire-vine.com