

# Moments

MONARCH BEACH RESORT MAGAZINE

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## FROM DAY TO NIGHT

AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE MONARCH BAY  
BEACH CLUB REMODEL

**FLAVOR AND FLARE**  
DISHERS AND DRINKS  
WITH SMOKY PROFILES

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WITH GEMSTONES



Hay-Smoked Snake River  
Farms Rib-Eye Tasting at  
Bourbon Steak Orange County,  
A Michael Mina Restaurant



# Up in Smoke

Flames lend a unique flavor to handcrafted cocktails,  
entrées and desserts at Monarch Beach Resort.

BY EILEEN KEIGHLEY

**F**rom smoldering bonfires on the beach to heating up the grill for summertime barbecues: Memories of good times spent with friends and family often feature a smoky backdrop and flame-cooked fare. In fact, people have prepared food over open fire for nearly 2 million years, and the process has long been valued for its ability to kill bacteria and make ingredients easier to digest. However, today, the technique is equally prized for the resulting smoky flavor, which is often viewed as seasoning. It is a component that can completely transform a dish or drink and give it added dimension.

At Monarch Beach Resort, the property's acclaimed chefs and mixologists are lighting things up to create smoky handcrafted cocktails, signature entrées and critically acclaimed desserts.

## FIERY FARE AT BOURBON STEAK

When entering Bourbon Steak Orange County, A Michael Mina Restaurant, there is a feeling of anticipation. With windows that frame the Pacific Ocean, bottles of the finest wines on display, a large and welcoming bar glistening with colorful liquors and comfy leather chairs, the inviting space promises fare that is as delightful as the atmosphere. And the fun starts as soon as you begin musing over the menu, which includes a playful drink list that offers modern twists on classic cocktails in addition to the iconic versions.

Jenny Buchhagen, a mixologist at Bourbon Steak, has seen an increase in guests' interest for smoky libations. "With the rise of bourbon lovers, and alongside classic cocktails, smoke just goes hand in hand," she says. "It adds another element and layer to the cocktail as well as giving a simple cocktail more complexity."

Try the new-school Bee's Knees for a smoky twist on the restaurant's more traditional combination of gin, lemon juice, honey and lavender bitters. "[This cocktail is] made with Vida mezcal, fresh lemon juice, house-made cinnamon honey, egg white and a couple dashes of orange flower water. The cinnamon really

compliments the smoky aspect of the cocktail, while the honey and egg white soften the smoky profile, making it a really well-balanced cocktail with just the right amount of smoke," Buchhagen says. She also notes that she's happy to craft smoked cocktails on a whim, developing something new and different that the guests may not find on the menu.

The dining menu is equally exciting, brimming with fiery flavors and culinary theater. To start, the "Instant" Bacon is a crowd-pleasing appetizer. The flavors are multilayered, and its presentation brings a wow factor to the table. It features Duroc pork belly that is marinated in five-spice powder and braised in its own juices before being cooked and served with an intense bourbon-soy reduction, then sprinkled with a fine dust of candied Marcona almonds for added texture. To complete the dish, the pork belly sits atop gigante white beans, heirloom tomatoes and Calabrian chiles, which have been flashed with hot bacon fat to enhance the smokiness of the dish. The plate is then covered with a cloche and filled with hickory smoke using a "smoking gun" and presented tableside.



The new-school Bee's Knees cocktail

The restaurant is renowned for its impressive selection of steaks, from Snake River Farms' American wagyu tomahawk to prime Delmonico rib-eye. All of the steaks, except the Kagoshima A5, are cooked on a wood-enhanced grill using hickory chips that are known for their robust and sweet, bacon-esque flavor.

For an especially smoky entrée, try the Hay-Smoked Snake River Farms Rib-Eye Tasting, which is also covered in a cloche, filled with hickory smoke and presented tableside, plus garnished with sauce au poivre. The steak comes accompanied with maitake mushrooms, which add smoky and earthy components to the dish, while white rose marble potatoes glazed in a wagyu reduction give a tangy contrast to the rich meat.

### SMOKY SPECTACLES AT AVEO TABLE + BAR

Mediterranean cuisine is known for its spicy and smoky flavor profile, and a special menu item at AVEO Table + Bar presents a simple yet impactful amalgamation of these elements. Currently available as a secret offering for those who are in the know, and coming to the regular menu this winter, is a smoked oysters dish created by Chef de Cuisine Donald Lockhart. "When these oysters come out to the table and they're smoldering and the smoke is coming off [them], it just kind of speaks to that multiple dimensions of eating where it's not just taste; it's bite, smell and there's hearing involved, too, with the crackling of the wood," Lockhart explains, noting that the kitchen



"Instant" Bacon at Bourbon Steak

has maple, chestnut and cedar, but the type of hardwood presented to each guest is random.

To prepare this mollusk masterpiece, six oysters are shucked and drained of their liquor to allow space for a Calabrian chile-infused garlic butter. They are then set on a bed of salt atop the hardwood, all of which is then placed on the grill; the board is ignited and then everything is covered to allow for smoke to fill the chamber. Through this cooking process, the oysters are poached in the butter while absorbing the exquisitely smoky flavors. "It is a very simplistic presentation of a simplistic dish that just kind of speaks for itself. There are three flavors, you have the oyster, the smoke and the butter with chile and that's it," Lockhart says.

For dessert, nothing says summer evenings like a wood fire and s'mores. Luckily, AVEO Table + Bar has literally bottled it up as a dessert to be shared year-round. The S'mores Aroma Experience is a sensory dessert that is plated under a cloche filled with smoke, sending a plume into the air as it is unveiled tableside. Under the cloche is a raspberry-marshmallow moon pie topped with a peaked meringue that is lightly toasted. To complete the campfire-like experience, a chile-infused hot chocolate is served alongside for a slightly spicy component. The restaurant encourages sharing and is happy to bring extra spoons.

### FLAMING FLAVORS AT 33°NORTH

The living room hub of the resort, 33°North is known for its fine Champagnes, cognacs and whiskeys, but you'll miss out if you ignore its extensive cocktail list. It's filled with the classics as well as a number of smoky sips. Tyler Lane, a mixologist at 33°North, likes to experiment by swapping out commonly used spirits in traditional cocktails with options like mezcal, tequila's smoky cousin, or Laphroaig, the single malt Scotch whisky from Islay, with its strong smoky flavor developed in the

RIGHT: HUGE GALDONES

## MEET MEZCAL

Tequila's smoky cousin is making a splash in drinks at the resort.

While mezcal and tequila are both made from agave, they differ in that tequila must be crafted from Blue Weber agave, while mezcal can be made from over 30 varieties. The smokiness comes from the process of burying agave hearts in earth pits, where they slowly roast over hot rocks before being crushed, fermented and then distilled. Mezcal can be clear, golden or amber. It is classified by age and it's common to see single-village varieties.

For example, Monarch Beach Resort serves Del Maguey, a single-village variety, as well as Sombra, an artisanal 100% espadin agave mezcal handcrafted in Santiago Matatlan, Mexico. Originally, mezcal was sipped straight, but, recently, it has seen a bit of a renaissance and is often substituted in cocktails like daiquiris or margaritas. Drinking mezcal is also environmentally friendly: The byproducts are often upcycled into adobe bricks to build homes. Plus, the production process brings valuable employment to people in local communities who hand-harvest on the slopes of the Sierra Norte region of Oaxaca, Mexico.



La Maria, a bloody mary with a mezcal base

kiln during the drying process of the barley.

Smoky flavors can be an acquired taste, so Lane urges caution as well as a lot of trial and error. "Balance is very important when you are introducing smoky flavors; too much and it's overpowering," he says. "If I am creating an Oaxaca Old-Fashioned, then I would look to put a half ounce of mezcal to one-and-a-half ounces of tequila. This way, you get a smoky, spirit-forward drink where the smoky

flavor doesn't dominate the palate."

Lane also has some suggestions for how to pair these cocktails with the eatery's Bourbon Bites bar menu: "Look toward the earthy tones of the duck fat fries or the [Brussels] sprouts with the ever-changing refreshing elements, including sliced apples that pair with the citrus-lime glaze, or the Bourbon Chocolate Bar, [which is] rich and indulgent."

### SMOKE-INFUSED SIPS AT SOMBRA

Sombra is the resort's poolside cantina and kitchen, which serves up authentic, fresh Mexican food and drinks to guests lounging in the luxurious cabanas or seated at tables overlooking the pool area. Additionally, its lively hand-crafted cocktail list is full of smoky flavors. For a flame-inspired margarita, try the Sombra Smoky-Rita made with mezcal. According to mixologist Scott G. Sieverts, who recently moved from Sombra to Monarch Bay Beach Club, there are three important things to consider when making this cocktail. First, the quality of the agave syrup is critical to get an authentic flavor. "Opt for an organic agave syrup like Monin; some can be very sweet and a little processed tasting. ... Shake the mixture for at least 60 seconds to allow the agave to solidify, and use a high-quality mezcal like Sombra," Sieverts says.

Sieverts also addresses the question of whether or not to add salt or Tajín seasoning to the glass rim. The answer: It's a personal choice, but many believe it makes the sweet and sour flavors zing a little while reducing any bitterness. According to Sieverts, "One in four [guests] now opt for a Tajín rim on their margaritas, which works for those looking for a little more spice as well as a hint of citrus from the dehydrated lime."

Another favorite to be sipped while enjoying time by the pool is the La Maria, a new take on the classic bloody mary that substitutes the vodka for mezcal, giving it a subtle smoky flavor. Whether you prefer a more discrete taste or a powerful punch, there are no smoke and mirrors when it comes to these on-property sips and bites; just the former. 🍷



The S'mores Aroma Experience dessert at AVEO Table + Bar