



KNIVES OUT!

Dig into some of the most mouthwatering steaks at fine dining restaurants in Carlsbad.

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY **SARA FREITAG**

From impressive tomahawks to tender filets to dry-aged rib-eyes, quality steak is easy to find in Carlsbad. And when it comes to presentation, ambiance and service, these fine dining destinations offer a prime experience. Here are the juicy details on where you can indulge in some of our town's finest dishes.

VIGILUCCI'S SEAFOOD & STEAKHOUSE

3878 Carlsbad Blvd. • 760.434.2580 • vigiluccis.com

THE SCENE: Humming with rich Italian heritage, Vigilucci's is a homegrown North County eatery that appeals equally to the casual coastal passerby and the formally clad dinner guest. With white linen-topped tables and elegant ambiance, as well as breezy beach views, this restaurant is not only elevated, but inviting.

THE SEASONING: Owner Roberto Vigilucci remains rooted in his passion for culture, community and fine cuisine—and he stays inspired by dining out, trotting the globe and striving to provide the highest quality ingredients to deliver authentic Italian flavors. Chef Dana Sills says, "The Prime Tomahawk is beautifully marbled and has a high fat content that renders and flavors the steak as it grills. Simple seasonings are all that are needed, which allow the true essence of the tomahawk and its natural flavors to stimulate the palate."

THE SIDES: Recommended sides include the cannellini beans with garlic and rosemary, the grilled asparagus, a loaded baked potato or truffle fries.



POLO STEAKHOUSE

4980 Avenida Encinas
760.930.9100 • polocarlsbad.com

THE SCENE: Polo modernizes steakhouse culture while still playing within the bounds of the classic genre. It's an ideal spot to ring in big wins such as job promotions, but it also maintains an approachability that's fit for 5 o'clock cocktails on Fridays. Prioritizing quality cuisine and professional, yet friendly, service, this fine dining restaurant is a visual oasis, replete with mood lighting and butcher block tables that set the scene for celebration.

THE SEASONING: The Eye of Rib Steak, an American Wagyu from Snake River Farms in Idaho, is hand cut and hand weighed in the same fashion as all of Polo's steaks. Chef Ryan Gilbert says, "I use a blend of smoked Maldon sea salt and diamond crystal rough-cut kosher...so, I do a 50-50 ratio and I find that it really adds that extra kind of carbon, smoky flavor to the steak." Another key ingredient is a four-peppercorn mélange, toasted and ground in-house.

THE SIDES: Polo offers a range of accompaniments, including broccolini, potatoes and its famous mushrooms, which are smoked in applewood chips for an earthy, forest-floor flavor.



PAON RESTAURANT & BAR

2975 Roosevelt St.
760.729.7377 • paoncarlsbad.com

THE SCENE: Inspired by minimalistic design elements from the Art Deco era, Paon's Old Hollywood aesthetic transports guests back to the 1930s and '40s; you can easily picture Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall lounging at the bar. Sophisticated and yet far from stuffy, this French eatery runs on a from-scratch kitchen that turns out proper stocks, seasoning, sauces and more.

THE SEASONING: The filet mignon is an 8-oz., center-cut, prime steak. Owner Steve Barr explains, "When you go down and cut the center out of it, you're talking about using three, maybe four cuts out of the whole loin. That's what we buy. We're talking the best of the best." Seasoned with olive oil, salt and pepper, the meat is finished off with just enough time in the oven to keep it warm and tender.

THE SIDES: The filet mignon pictured here is topped with Merrill butter and accompanied by thinly sliced Yukon gold potatoes—layered with Parmigiano Reggiano, heavy cream and a little bit of salt and white pepper—as well as asparagus and Bordelaise sauce for the perfect pairing to please the taste buds.



BOB'S STEAK & CHOP HOUSE

Omni La Costa Resort & Spa
2100 Costa Del Mar Road
760.929.6346
bobs-steakandchop.com/carlsbad/

THE SCENE: Nodding to its Texas origins, Bob's Steak & Chop House marries a dual emphasis on fine dining and Southern home cooking. Born in the land where everything bigger is better, there's a priority on high value and generous hospitality. Offering classic indoor steakhouse seating in addition to a gorgeous outdoor patio, this restaurant at Omni La Costa Resort & Spa serves delicious food with a side of serenity.

THE SEASONING: Referring to the prime tenderloin filet, Chef Justin Huntington says, "We have a five- to seven-minute resting period, and then we sear the steak on the flat top in its own juices and a little clarified butter. This gives a really crispy texture, and then you get the softness and the buttery flavor."

THE SIDES: The steak is shown here with Bob's house-smashed potatoes and a glazed carrot, which is almost considered a garnish, in that it comes with every steak, thanks to the restaurant's Southern roots. Other staples include complimentary pickles and bread, as well as a number of additional sides to indulge in as you desire.



EMBER & RYE

Park Hyatt Aviara Resort and Golf Club
7477 Batiquitos Drive
760.448.1234
parkhyattaviara.com/eat-drink/
ember-and-rye/

THE SCENE: Surrounded by panoramic Aviara golf course views and the tranquility of Batiquitos Lagoon, Ember & Rye invites guests to take a deep breath. With elegant indoor and outdoor seating, the restaurant's clean design mimics a painter's canvas, where the hues of the food take center stage. Equally fit for a special evening out or post-golf pick-me-up, Ember & Rye emphasizes top-notch service, while taking quite a few creative cues from clubhouse culture.

THE SEASONING: When talking about the steaks here, Chef Bradley Chance says, "We like to add a bit of the fire to everything." In addition to the signature smoky notes that come from being seared on an outdoor grill, most of Ember & Rye's steaks, including the featured 14-oz. dry-aged rib-eye, are seasoned with Montreal steak seasoning. This conveys a homemade taste that reflects the restaurant's mission to make guests feel comfortable from the moment they walk through the doors.

THE SIDES: Because the steaks are so generously portioned—such as the 40-oz. tomahawk, which is wheeled out on a small cart—it's common to order one or two steaks for the table, accompanied by several sides to share. The cherry-glazed mushrooms are the most popular order, while other sides include mashed potatoes, asparagus and more.