

# CATCH

of the *DAY*

SPANISH TANG MEETS COASTAL FUSION AT  
WINE COUNTRY GEM BAR LE CÔTE

by ANNA CONSTANTINO  
Photograph by SILAS FALLSTICH

The word *côte* parallels the English “coast,” a fitting representation of the spirit of Los Olivos’ newest European-inspired seafood eatery, Bar Le Côte. Executive Chef and Co-Owner Brad Matthews works alongside Co-Owners Greg and Daisy Ryan to curate a locally-inspired coastal menu with Spanish influence. As the sister eatery to one-Michelin-starred Bell’s in Los Alamos, it has caught the attention of locals and visitors alike for its whimsical and social atmosphere.

Awaiting my first course I survey the thoughtfully developed space, a retro paradise of popping color. Emerald green walls, plush velvet booths, and creative accents evoke a striking allure. We snack on Jamón Ibérico de Bellota-aged manchego, marcona almonds, and Iberian ham—rekindling distant memories of feasting in Barcelona. The Gambas al Ajillo appear, inspired by an enthused suggestion from a neighboring table boasting, “You’ve got to try them!” The gulf shrimp are smothered in lemon, parsley, and crispy garlic, revealing a notable crunch with each bite.

A tower of ice graces the table—four delicate uni sitting atop. A moment of suspense comes and goes. I take charge, spritzing a piece with lemon, devouring it whole. Uni is a rather indescribable delicacy, however, I will humor you. The texture is that of panna cotta, effortlessly melting in my mouth. Its flavor bursts with brine and tang, the piece itself resembling a delicate, porous creature. It is

an odd sensation, nevertheless, a delightfully unique one. A sip of Storm Sauvignon Blanc, a local favorite, cleanses my palate as our frozen chalice is swapped for a sizzling cast iron of Arroz Verde: vegetarian paella. I scoop what I consider to be the optimal bite: a heaping spoonful of bright green paella, mixed with cipollini onions, red peppers, and a juicy red tomato on top. All the elements of a stellar entrée are present, from presentation to the layering of bright flavors. Our second entrée arrives to the tune of a more daunting endeavor, a Whole Roasted Sea Bream, which we slice down its back revealing tender fillets. The fish is paired with house-made romesco sauce (a Spanish staple) and grilled lemons. The dish is flavorful and abundant while still maintaining a distinct simplicity that screams “less is more.”

Saving room for dessert, as ingrained in my practice, presents itself as an impossible undertaking. Be that as it may, I am drawn to the Dark Chocolate Pot de Crème. The dessert is topped with whipped milk chocolate, wonderfully juxtaposing the dark chocolate custard base, and chili-spiced chocolate crumble for an unexpected kick. The ceramic dish is polished in unison with our wine glasses, and we traverse back down the moonlit highway. Contrasting most five-course meals, I feel refreshed and nourished, a distinguishable quality of a minimalist approach to dining. Bar Le Côte is not only an incentive to set off for wine country, but an even better excuse to make it the reason you return. \*

