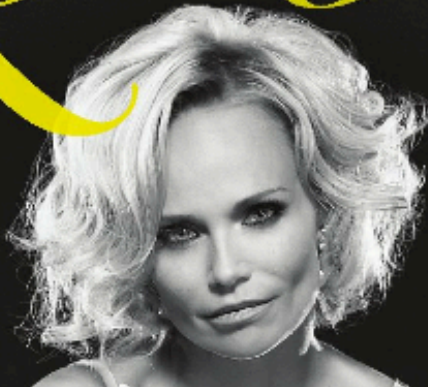


beverly hills

# Lifestyle

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## Asian Addictions

*Starfish, Laguna Beach* | by Tiffany Jaeger | photos by Rod Foster

Dive into a culinary adventure at the chic new Starfish Restaurant in Laguna Beach. Nancy Wilhelm, owner of the successful Tabu Grill, has created another culinary success. The menu is inspired from many coastal regions in Thailand, Vietnam, China, Korea and India. It may seem like an odd location in Laguna Beach's Albertson plaza across from the Montage Hotel, but once you enter through the detailed studded door, you have entered a whole new Asian experience.

With Chef Jarvis Yuan breathing intelligence in the kitchen and Nancy's creativeness, the cuisine has a real surprise in its fanciful interpretations of Asian flair. As for the ambiance, its chic contemporary Asian look creates a hip and sexy feel, and caters to a classy OC business and trendy crowd.

The Wok Fired Mussels may be the most crazily addictive thing to taste on the menu. Even if you don't like mussels or coconut, the buttery taste of lemongrass and spicy Thai basil coconut broth will have you begging for more. The coconut rice as a side dish is a must order. On a lighter side, the Saigon Spring Rolls are the way to go with a hint of mint, shrimp and raw veggies. And you will still have plenty of room for more food to come.

There's an appealing spin on the Slow Cooked 5-Spiced Baby Back Ribs that actually manages to taste somewhat novel, with a hint of cinnamon sprinkled atop the dry rubbed star anise. As the cinnamon infused meat melts off the bone into your mouth, it tastes like Christmas morning. Among the Bamboo Forest, the standout is the Wild Mushroom Garlic Noodles. It is a very light noodle, the perfect amount of garlic in a wild forest of mushrooms with a touch of sweet basil. If you want the heat, go for the Red Curry Seafood Stew and order it spicy or on fire. This dish has a perfect marriage of sweet and spicy infused with coastal Asian flavors of coconut, lime, ginger, leeks and chili. Make sure you order the coconut rice with this entrée. If you don't have a big appetite, but are ready for a mouthful of freshness, then order the Shiro Miso Salmon Salad.

After a great meal of so many different inspiring tastes and spices, try a dessert that is a must: Traditional Profiteroles. These are not your traditional profiteroles filled with sweetened cream. In between these puffed pastries, you will find Tahitian vanilla bean gelato waiting for your server to pour a sinful chocolate sauce onto this perfect ending to the evening.

Make sure at some point of the evening to meander the restaurant to see some tasteful, chic, stylish corners that create a unique modern Asian flair. Once again, Nancy Wilhelm has successfully created a great scene and a culinary triumph.



Your Starfish addiction begins with the Wok Fired Mussels



Fresh and delicious, the Saigon Spring Rolls

