

ON THE MENU

LarkCreekSteak

San Francisco

BY MARK BRANDAU



LarkCreekSteak, the newest concept from the Lark Creek Restaurant Group, continues the company's emphasis on fresh, local ingredients. In addition to steaks, LarkCreekSteak offers such appetizers as a grilled head-on hawaiian blue prawn cocktail, below.

As diners on the West Coast might expect, the Lark Creek Restaurant Group developed its newest concept, LarkCreekSteak, a modern steakhouse in the Westfield San Francisco Centre, by doing what it does naturally: sourcing the freshest local ingredients and showcasing them in simple preparations.

The multiconcept company, co-founded by celebrity chef Bradley Ogden, has used its farm-fresh approach and an all-American wine list to create a steakhouse that departs from that dining niche's typical dark, cavernous interiors and heavy, carnivorous bills of fare.

"When the opportunity came to create a steakhouse, which the developers wanted, we said we only knew one way how to do it," says Michael Dellar, co-founder and principal of Lark Creek Restaurant Group. "The approach is seasonal, fresh and creative. The wine list matches because it's only American wines. It's what you'd expect Lark Creek to do."

The restaurant's management team not only wanted to emphasize the freshness of Northern California's seasonal produce, but also to downplay the sheer quantity of meat often served in American steakhouses.

"As we developed this project," Dellar says, "I looked at the customer base of this shopping center and said, 'There are a lot of women here.' So for women guests, or even for people who don't want to eat as much, we offer smaller portions of our filet or New York strip."

Jeremy Bearman, chef of LarkCreekSteak, says smaller meat entrées like the 9-ounce New York strip or 6-ounce filet mignon give guests the opportunity to sample more from the menu. "We wanted people to be able to enjoy lots of different offerings and not feel like they just ate the entire cow," he says. "We have guests that finish a whole 16-ounce rib-eye, but the largest sellers are the small steaks. Guests don't want the steak to be the only thing they eat the entire meal."

Lark Creek's reputation for presenting fresh, seasonal choices in classic preparations attracted Bearman to join its culinary team. He previously served as executive sous chef at Daniel Boulud's db Bistro Moderne in New York and L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon in Las Vegas.

"I think that's the reason why I took this position," Bearman says. "I love classic American and French cooking and putting a twist on them. It's fun to be able to integrate that into a new concept. The freshness of ingredients here is phenomenal. I've never seen the amount of different types of grapes. Heirloom tomatoes last until Halloween, and they never last that long in New York. The quality and variety here is tremendous."

Patrons will have to wait until spring for asparagus from the Sacramento Delta to be available. And though diners may be disappointed about a vegetable's seasonal unavailability, LarkCreekSteak servers and managers make sure to advertise their farm-fresh values.



MARKET SALAD

bradley's caesar salad

whole leaf romaine, parmesan croutons 9

mixed lettuce and fresh herb salad

cypress grove goat cheese, slow-roasted beets, blood orange oil 9

belgian endive, watercress, maytag blue cheese salad

roasted walnuts, grapes, quince paste, sherry vinegar 11

crispy buttermilk sweetbread and frisée salad

golden chanterelles, toasted garlic, poached farm egg 14

STARTERS

grilled head-on hawaiian blue prawn cocktail

root vegetables chips, cilantro aioli 17

basket of crispy fried ipswich clams

shaved horseradish, celery root remoulade, parsley 15

wood-grilled thick-cut sonoma foie gras

apple tartlet, herb salad, burnt honey gastrique 19

pepper-crusted country style pâté with toasted pistachios

pear compote, mustard pickled onions 10

tartare of beef tenderloin

sourdough croutons, baby field greens, lemon oil 14

BEEF STEAKS AND ROASTS served à la carte

usda prime new york strip steak — 9oz / 14oz 26 / 36

usda prime bone-in, rib-eye steak — 18oz 35

dry-aged, usda prime boneless rib-eye steak — 16oz 43

filet mignon — 6oz / 9oz 26 / 36

usda prime porterhouse for two — 28oz 39 per person

AT A GLANCE

Concept: contemporary steakhouse

Location: Westfield San Francisco Centre, 845 Market St.

Opened: Sept. 28

Seating: 68

Best-selling items: 9-ounce New York strip; 6-ounce filet mignon; prix-fixe meal of Lark Creek Classics: Bradley's Caesar salad, Yankee pot roast and butterscotch pudding

Menu maker: chef Jeremy Bearman

Owner: Lark Creek Restaurant Group

Website: www.larkcreek.com

"We want to be recognized for our farm-to-table philosophy," says general manager Michael Kapash. "We put it right there on our menu. If guests don't recognize the farm-fresh aspect, we've missed an opportunity. Our servers need to be able to articulate it as well. It doesn't set us apart unless people recognize it. It's small farms, pesticide-free, and we've been to where we buy our duck from."

Another branding technique emphasized at LarkCreekSteak is a \$29 prix-fixe meal of "Lark Creek Classics," including Bradley's Caesar salad, Yankee pot roast and butterscotch pudding. A la carte dishes of pork, poultry and fish keep the menu balanced so that high-cost steaks do not dominate the offerings, Kapash says, thus allowing the restaurant to keep combined food and labor costs to its target of between 60 percent and 64 percent of total sales. Kapash and Dellar noted that it was too early to determine unit-level data, including per-person check average. ■

mbrandau@nrn.com

red wine-marinated hanger steak — 10oz	19
slow-roasted whole usda prime top sirloin, thin sliced	22

MEAT AND POULTRY served à la carte

petaluma chicken and seasonal mushroom "pot pie" market vegetables 19

roasted snake river kurobuta pork rack

mustard-braised cabbage 25

cider-braised niman ranch pork shank

caramel apples, smoky pork jus 27

skewer of grilled colorado lamb leg and merguez sausage

dried fruit chutney, yogurt 23

FRESH FISH AND SHELLFISH served à la carte

crispy butterfish "black cod" in brick dough

brown garlic, creamy sweet corn 27

grilled pacific escolar

heirloom tomatoes, chorizo, marcona almonds, shallot vinaigrette 28

sautéed skate wing

capers, muscat grapes, pine nuts, tea-soaked raisins 24

butter-poached 1 1/2 pound maine lobster

butternut squash, roasted lobster emulsion 45

NONMEAT ENTREES

"risotto" of yukon gold potatoes with fresh figs

marcona almonds, picholine olives, arugula, reggiano parmesan 22

fettuccine with golden chanterelles

crispy onions, brussels sprout petals, micro basil 21

PRIX-FIXE DINNER — LARK CREEK CLASSICS 29

•bradley's caesar salad whole leaf romaine, parmesan croutons

•yankee pot roast potato purée, glazed root vegetables

•butterscotch pudding