

The Black Whale has arrived with a splash and a shot across the bow to all restaurants



Naturally sweet, fresh and mouth-watering: Scallops Wrapped in Bacon – pan seared and oven roasted, cauliflower puree, asparagus and Parmesan.

I think we're in the same boat, pardon the pun. Another restaurant, and a seafood one to boot? To be honest, when I heard the Black Whale opened, I thought to myself "What's to get excited about? Another seafood restaurant opened up and they'll offer all the standard menu items: Lazyman's Lobster, Surf 'N Turf, scallops wrapped in bacon, etc."

Now, don't get me wrong – I love these classics and still eat them – I'm just not going to go to another place when so many places already *do* exceptional jobs of these dishes. I guess this is a sort of seafood fatigue, if that's possible.

I'm a great lover of seafood, so if you told me that the Black Whale was going to offer seafood, but do it differently...you'd get my attention. If you told me that the seafood was coming from boat to restaurant – unprocessed, untouched, unadulterated and fresh as can be, I would *really* be paying attention. If you told me that the Black Whale had an experienced, traveled chef behind the wheel who was creatively applying new ideas, yet keeping his feet on the ground and rooted in the fundamentals, I would say "Table for two, please."



*Seafood lovers
rejoice: the Black
Whale features seafood
that was just caught!*

You see, someone did tell me these things. They told me these things and then some. I heard the Black Whale won big at the Newport Chowder Festival: 1st Place for Clam Chowder in the Judges Choice **and** the People's Choice.

What begin as a murmur, progressed to loud din and finally became some deafening hubbub. The restaurant's name kept coming up in conversation, directly and indirectly. They were showing up on my social media news feed, I was getting emails, and friends were telling me that it wasn't the same 'ol, same 'ol. My brother Mike's foodie friend Craig said that he goes there three or more times per week. He swore up and down. He ranted and he raved. He pried and he pressed. "This is something special. Something different. The seafood is coming straight off the boats. There's a raw bar, patio, a great atmosphere, a world class front and back end. There's more,

but you have to see it.”

There was no more being stubborn. I had to see what the noise was all about. The three of us cleared our schedule and set reservations. We were coming. We were going to put a hurting on some seafood. Sorry little guys. You are too darn delicious.

The three amigos do seafood

Heading to the Black Whale was pretty easy. I can't recall how many times I've been to the the Fisherman's wharf, working on boats. I actually was inside the very building before anyone was discussing using the property for anything. I love New Bedford, and I love its history, waterfront and particularly love seeing all the vessels in port. I could sit at a bench for hours observing the ships, workers and sun glistening off the water. This is the Black Whale's "backyard."

On the way in I noticed a massive "Lily Tomlin" chair. Did I just give away my age? I can hear people now: "Who's Lily Tomlin? How ancient is Joe?" This chair declares "I'm fun. Take advantage of the photo opportunity." While closed, we noticed how massive the deck was. It's April, so a bit cold, but I could imagine how much fun this deck will be in the warmer months – just sitting there, sipping cocktails and enjoying the view and live entertainment.



Oysters harvested from your choice of 4 different fishing grounds – served with chipotle cocktail,

*green apple mignonette
and a cucumber &
jalapeño snow.*

Walking into the restaurant I had the only vision I have ever had of being inside the building, embedded in my mind. Beat up, run down, and on its way out. I have no idea how much money was spent on renovations, but it had to be a LOT. This was an entirely new venue. I'd imagine they tore everything down. This place was simply gorgeous. Brightly lit, warm, and inviting. The large prints of vintage 19th century photos caught my eye, being that I recognized most of them. The owners clearly want everyone to know how equally proud they are of New Bedford.

We were instantly greeted by a friendly hostess and immediately headed to our table. We passed by a gorgeous, tempting display of just caught seafood embedded in ice. The salivating had begun. Our waitress came promptly and she was as friendly. I may be obsessive compulsive about this, since I mention it in virtually every article about a restaurant, but it's a principle I swear by: the attitudes and personalities of the waitstaff are direct indicators of how an entire restaurant is run. It starts at the top and trickles down.

Most of the time, unhappy or even churlish waiters and waitresses are such a way because the management treats them poorly. When you are in a place where everyone seems genuinely happy it contributes to the atmosphere. It did just that here. I eavesdropped and observed all the other waiters and waitresses and noticed the same relaxed, friendly, yet not overbearing attitudes. Morale is huge. Nothing is worse than having top notch food, but having the experience ruined by your waiter or waitress. Not a problem here, our waitress was as good as it gets. Always present, talkative but not chatty, and most important attentive.

Beer, wine, and oyster shooters

The **drink menu** had an impressive wine list. I usually drink “red,” but decided on something to compliment the seafood that we were about to punish. I ordered a Stella (Moscato), Craig had a beer and Mike ordered a “red.” To kickstart the night we all agreed to try an oyster shooter. We opted for the Bloody Mary Oyster shooter: a fresh, cold oyster in a shooter of vodka and tomato juice. The tangy cocktail was a delight and the perfect way to get going.



The large rectangular bar is an elegant, inviting centerpiece. The drinks menu features a sizable wine list, beers and of course cocktails.

We pored over the menus and sure enough, Craig was right: there were standards here, but there was plenty of something different. We decided to start with the **Cheese Board** – fresh variety of berries, grapes, crostini, four select cheeses, a drizzle of honey and jam, the **Mediterranean Chopped Salad** – romaine hearts, tomatoes, cucumbers, black olives, red onions, chick peas, feta cheese, extra virgin olive oil & red wine vinegar, and one that no one can ever bypass: **Scallops Wrapped in Bacon** – pan seared and oven roasted, cauliflower puree, asparagus and Parmesan foam.

I’ve talked in past spotlights about pet peeves of mine. One of them is being served processed seafood and charging me a ton of money. I’m paying a lot, we’re eating in one of the top

fishing ports on earth, and on the waterfront. There is simply no reason for processed seafood ever. One bite into the scallops and that tell-tale bright and sweet flavor washed over taste buds and earned a smile. When you've tasted a fresh scallop and one cooked properly, you can never go to processed again. This made me happy in a multitude of ways. The Parmesan foam and cauliflower sauce were perfect compliments to the scallop – small players not meant to overpower. There was clearly plenty of thought put into each part. This would be the theme for the night: well-thought out ingredients, with each playing **together**, not singing their own songs. There was a lead singer and there was a crew of backup singers.

The Raw Bar, Owner Albert Santos and Manager Luis DaSilva

The raw bar offered three different shellfish platters, the "Shellfish Platter (Serves 1-2)," the "Grand Shellfish Platter (serves 3-4)," and the "Black Whale Platter (serves 4+)." All three came with chicken lobster, cherrystones, oysters and shrimp cocktail in different amounts. The Black Whale Platter also came with King crab legs, lump crab meat, and oysters. We were REALLY tempted to get one of these, but figured we should try as many dishes as possible and not be stuffed on one.

We ordered oysters which came from four local places which you could choose: Barnstable, Sewanescott, VA, Marion, or Wellfleet. They were served with chipotle cocktail, green apple mignonette and a cucumber & jalapeno snow. Say what? Do you try each one with an oyster? Do you combine them? I wasn't sure, but it was a great conversation piece. The cucumber & jalapeno snow was a table favorite with believe it or not, the apple mignonette a pleasant surprise. These worked in spite of how they sounded. They worked *well*. Lead singer with his/her backup again. These sauces were the "Oohs" and "Ahs."



Seafood Cioppino – swordfish, tuna, shrimp, mussels, clams, & littlenecks, simmered in a spicy tomato broth, tossed with linguine and fresh herbs.

While we waited for round two, Craig mentioned that the owner is Albert Santos of “Hygrade Ocean Products,” which I did not know. Someone who knows seafood inside and out is a good thing. Nay, a great thing.

While discussing this very thing, the restaurant manager, Luis DaSilva came to check on things. Since Craig has frequent seafood flier miles here, he kept the conversation going with Mr. DaSilva who was eager and passionate about what was going on at the Black Whale. “Albert believes in New Bedford, and strongly feels that a restaurant like this is what the city needs to compete with the larger city restaurants. Why should people from the South Coast travel to the big city to enjoy a good meal, when they can enjoy the freshest seafood and raw bar right here in New Bedford? They are buying our products and showcasing them all over the country, all over the big cities, so why not us?!”

Good question, Luis. One that the Black Whale has answered resoundingly.

Seafood symphony, forbidden Salmon, and beef, beef, beef

Next up in this concert was the **Crisp Buttermilk Soft Shell**

Crabs – yellow tomato salad, baby arugula, shaved fennel, smoked tomato vinaigrette and basil oil. For some the thought of eating an entire crab, shell and all, seems a bit bizarre. Trust me, it works. It's not what you think and it's certainly not crunchy. It has all the subtle sweetness associated with crab meat, and the basil oil and vinaigrette is really perfectly complimentary and properly positioned in the ensemble. A work of art.

The **Tuna Tartare** consisting of a generous amount of *adobo* rubbed Tuna, citrus, avocado, and pickled cucumber. Tartare isn't something I would typically ordered, but the other two were adamant about it. A genuinely pleasant surprise. Now, I would order it!

The lovely **Salmon Sashimi** was comprised of marinated Del Cabo baby Tomatoes (red wine vinegar, extra virgin olive oil, and shallots), and basil "Two Ways": basil salt and freshly sliced basil. An absolute joy. Fresh, fresh, fresh salmon with quality that you can notice olive oil, and the just picked, not dry flake, basil just puts it over the top. Everything here is well-thought out and again, has its proper placement.

One of the highlights of the evening was the **Forbidden Salmon**, which I was really looking forward to. I'm a "bizarre" foods guy in the sense that I not only get excited about trying something that I have never tried, but I will eat anything at least once.



*The Black Whale's
backyard view: the
Fisherman's Wharf Pier
3. Great view and site*

for many fun events.

The forbidden Salmon was a perfectly pan seared salmon on a bed of unusual black rice, exotic mushrooms, and lightly dressed with a red wine berry sauce. This went beyond my expectations. I've eaten a lot of salmon in my day and it's my favorite fish when done right. There was a subtle crust meaning it was cooked quickly at very high heat to make sure all the juices were locked in. When I busted open the felt at its center, slightly salty sea juice just oozed out. The black rice has an interesting history: apparently it was reserved for the aristocrats during Medieval times – something too expensive for the masses to eat. The flavor profile reminded me of a cross between wild rice and shiitake mushrooms – one of the reasons I believe chef Barros added the exotic mushrooms. a superlative dish!

One of the subtle touches that I really enjoyed is that these sauces are placed aside the centerpieces. The chef isn't egotistically forcing you to have it his way. He wants you to have it your way. He wants you to choose. The complimentary sauces aren't drizzled over the top and forced on you. If you are a purist, you can abstain from the sauce altogether. If you like jazz, you can dip in all of the sauces offered. If you are somewhere in between, you have a place too.

The prodigal son returns

Ok, something very special *is* going on here. It's one thing to eat fantastic food, but it's an altogether different thing to eat food so incredible that you genuinely want to know who made it. You want to meet the person who is responsible.

That person is Fairhaven native Matthew Barros and he calls his cuisine "New American." Matthew is a sort of prodigal son, having traveled about the country practicing and perfecting his craft before coming home. Graduating from New York's Culinary Institute of America, Barros honed his early chops in Miami at various restaurants. He then came home and spent four

years at Boston's Asian Fusion Myers & Chang to rave reviews.

Always seeking to grow and improve, he left Myers & Chang to take a swanky gig as Chef De Cuisine behind internationally renowned chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten's "Market" at the boutique design W Hotel in Boston. Succeeding under the scrutiny of a three Michelin star chef is no easy feat – Barros did just that with flying colors. The striving for flawlessness was honed here. Mediocrity is unacceptable. Only excellence is tolerated. The years spent here show in the presentation, the high standard for the ingredients and how impeccably each dish is integrated. Barros started with passion, balanced it with schooling, flavored it with various ethnic influences, and then brought it to an art form with his time spent with Jean-Georges Vongerichten.



A fun, relaxing atmosphere that can get a nice boost from one of the Black Whale's 53 oz. Margaritas!

Barros' hunger to learn more led him to a position as Executive Chef at the Wahlberg family's acclaimed Modern Italian-Mediterranean Alma Nove. His curiosity sated for the time being, the pull to come home was always there and now that Barros was a veteran, he wanted to showcase his talents, experience and original ideas. Serendipity reared her head and Barros was picked up by the Black Whale. The world class front end, demand for quality, fresh seafood, met a top, passionate,

schooled chef and produced one of New England's best seafood restaurants. One of the nation's best seafood restaurants.

"People inspire me. Food is about the love and people and families." began Barros. "My style was born in my childhood in some ways, but it took place in Miami when I moved. Being among the diverse cultures that were new to me spurred my curiosity in ways I would probably not have known if I stayed in the Northeast at such a young age. I want my food to tell a story. It is not enough for me to make food taste good. I want it to transport the guest to a place. I want it to take them somewhere that engages their memory for a long time to come."

The Black Whale in summary

Having lived all over the world, including an extended stay in Europe, eating at Belgian, France, German, and English restaurants, I have quite a bouquet to compare it to and the Black Whale has produced one of the best meals I have ever had in my life. The team at Black Whale has restored my faith in seafood, service, and managed to have a restaurant very capable of earning at least a Michelin star – if you aren't a food nerd like me, a Michelin star is a standard used only for the world's best restaurants. Nay, for the world's best of the best. Cream of the crop. Creme de la creme.

Here is a high-end eatery doing something special, but most importantly paying respects to New Bedford and the South Coast: we are a practical people with our feet on the ground. We want a posh, high-end restaurant, but we don't want fluff, pretentiousness and stuffiness.



*While you wait or
on your way out,
be sure to stop
and get a shot in
the fun "Lily
Tomlin" sized
chair!*

Keep your silver spoons, your doilies and gold-leaf encrusted chocolate sauces. Give us substance, passion and an unforgettable experience. Give us something to talk about. Something to be excited about. Give us an unforgettable experience.

The Black Whale does just that. The Black Whale surpasses the standards. It is an exceptional restaurant. The Black Whale sends a clear message to other restaurants: "Y'all must have forgot." **This** is what seafood is supposed to be: just caught, unmolested, au natural. This is what service is supposed to be: efficient, knowledgeable and accommodating. This is what a menu is supposed to be: inspired, affordable, and approachable.

When something this good comes along, you have to strike fast and hard. I hope that locals recognize what is going on here. Let's support this type of eatery. Support local, reward excellence. The Black Whale is using seafood off our docks, harvested by us. The produce comes from local farms, again

harvested by us. Head out to the Black Whale and enjoy a memorable experience...and send us your pictures of you and your family in the "Lily Tomlin" chair!

The Black Whale will feature live entertainment on the deck, typically on Sundays from Memorial Day to Labor Day weekend. Best to check before you head out. The deck will also be available for hosting private events. Cooking classes are planned as well as other patio events. If you enjoy the food and have a special function approaching, bring the Black Whale to you with their catering services.

Being on the Fisherman's Wharf means there is plenty of available parking. The Black Whale is also handicap accessible.

The Black Whale

Fisherman's Wharf Pier 3

New Bedford, Massachusetts

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Hours of Operation:

Sunday-Thursday: 11:30 am-10:00pm

Friday & Saturday: 11:30 am to midnight

Facebook: facebook.com/theblackwhalenb

Website: theblackwhale.com/

Menu: theblackwhale.com/menu/

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