

## Someone's In The Kitchen

# Waterfront and Center

By **RICHARD** and **AMANDA PAYATT**  
Special to CASA

**W**HEN IT COMES TO A GREAT PLACE TO EAT, with a front row seat of the Santa Barbara harbor, it is pretty tough to beat the set up at Chuck's Waterfront Grill. What a set up! For the last dozen years, Steve Hyslop has been running the show at the Waterfront. He doesn't really know where the time has gone, but he has loved every minute of it.

Steve grew up in La Jolla, California. At age thirteen he was working at the locally beloved Harry's Coffee Shop in La Jolla. He stayed with that until time for college. In college, he got a degree in forestry, and went to work for the Masonite Corporation for a year and a half after graduating. While spending most of his time working outdoors for Masonite, he realized that unlike the rest of the guys, he didn't want to go home and watch football after work. He wanted to go out to dinner. This led him to a revelation. What if he worked in restaurants for a living, and then got to spend his free time outdoors? Go fishing during the day, and work at night? Now there was an idea.

Steve gypsied around La Jolla restaurants for a few years. He worked the grill at places like Moonshadows and The Tavern. In 1978, he landed a spot at Chuck's Hawaiian Steakhouse in Santa Barbara and has stayed on ever since. From there, he also bought the Ballard Inn and took over its little restaurant, Café Chardonnay. It was quite the success. Between Café Chardonnay and Chuck's, Steve was making a name for himself. Then, in 1999, he sold the Ballard Inn and opened The Waterfront Grill.

Chuck's Waterfront Grill focuses on the simple principles that made Chuck's Hawaiian Steakhouse famous: really good steak and seafood. We have been eating the black and blue filet mignon for years. It is a solid filet dusted with Cajun spices, seared up, and then mounded over with blue cheese. Pair that off with the Chuck's Syrah (made by Brander Vineyard; plum

with hints of cayenne) and you have quite a one-two punch. On the seafood front, the scallops and lobster are grilled up and served simply with butter and lemon. The jumbo prawns are pan seared and done likewise or with garlic. The wine list is very good all around, but we really have to recommend the crisp and pineappley Rusack Chardonnay for the seafood, or the lush and creamy Grenache Blanc from Curran Wines. We have long been crazy for Grenache Blanc, and are happy to see it on a menu.

And, with a nod to the new vogue for tapas-sized plates, the appetizer selection has been beefed up. Whenever it is available, fresh caught ahi sashimi tops our list for small

plate favorites. The Thai Tenders, skewers of filet mignon served with a hot satay sauce are also a hit. (Pair the Tenders with the Seghesio Zinfandel.) And here, the generous crab cakes are served with a red pepper remoulade. The Kauai Mud Pie is a marvel. It is not only tasty, but nearly the size of Kauai when it lands on your table. While you sit there looking out from under the sail-structured shade umbrella at the sailboats, take a moment and realize that you are in one of those picture perfect moments that people travel half way around the world to experience. As the setting sun turns the ship masts orange and the mountains purple, have another sip of wine, and smile. You live here. You owe it to yourself to get out and enjoy this view more often.

**Chuck's Waterfront Grill** is located at 113 Harbor Way #180 and is open daily from 5pm-10pm. Reach them at (805) 564-1200.



Steve Hyslop

Photo by Priscilla@SantaBarbaraSeen.com



**Amanda and Richard Payatt** combine their considerable writing skills with their incredible knowledge and experience of fine dining to bring you this column.