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# RESTAURANT REVIEW: Consideration for tasteful blending

By **John Reger**

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**W**hat has always impressed me about chefs is their creativity, and the truly special ones are artists.

But that ingenuity is not limited to the kitchen with the great ones, and chef/owner Pascal Olhats recognizes that. He has provided a complete dining experience with Tradition by Pascal.

It seems that escaping a strip mall for location is virtually impossible for restaurants and the facility suffers because of that. Olhats has gotten past that by transforming his dining room into a larger version of a friend's dining room and patrons soon forget where they parked their cars.

The homeyness is apparent from the minute diners enter. The walls are painted with soft tones and the sconces and table lights provide soft and focused lighting. Different-colored roses in vases are placed throughout the restaurant.

For such a small space it is utilized well. There is a feeling of spaciousness in the room, though the tables are somewhat close together.

The maitre d' greeted us warmly and took us to the second level of the room to a table by the window. The service was incredible. We were warmly attended to and all of our menu questions were answered.

My guest and I had decided to let Olhats pick our meal, telling him nothing of our preferences, letting his innovation guide him.

It was the perfect plan. Olhats gave us a tasting and the smaller portions were exquisitely presented.

What I enjoyed most was that nothing was taken for granted by Olhats. Every ingredient in every dish appeared to be thoughtfully considered by the chef before it reached a plate.

The beet salad was a prime example. The sweetness of the beets and the crunchiness of the roasted hazelnuts meshed well, and the goat cheese was not the ordinary variety but a lemon-flavored version that added to the dish.

What I noticed immediately were the layers of taste Olhats employed with many of his dishes. The foie gras pate had three levels. There was the firm mix of duck liver, the sweetness of caramelized onions and the tangy Dijon mustard. Each had its own distinct taste and built upon each other when combined.

Another example was the salmon. The grilled piece of fish could proudly stand on its own, but when combined with the sautéed cabbage, wild mushrooms and tomato the combination was nothing short of a masterpiece.



The desserts, such as the thin apple tart shown here, are the end of a perfect dining experience at the long time favorite area restaurant.

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We were treated to two items not generally on the menu, but something Olhats had devised earlier and wanted to share with select guests. The first was a roasted duck that was prepared with bits of pear and sliced white onions. The second was a quail that was cooked with sausage and potato, which was good as well.

We were also treated to the sea bass, which is a house specialty. The thyme crust and seafood Chardonnay sauce was superb and like nothing I have ever tasted.

The dessert was what sent me over the edge. We had three samplings and it was difficult to pick our favorite. Olhats offers 10, all homemade.

The first was the flourless chocolate cake made with an espresso sauce and topped with rich whipped cream.

The second was the twice-baked cheesecake soufflé, a dessert that uses a white chocolate-raspberry ice cream on top.

The third was a thin apple tart that also has ice cream and caramel sauce.

I had been familiar with his reputation and that of the restaurant for quite some time but had waited to come to his dining room. I wanted to educate my palette before I entered his establishment, and I wanted to make sure that my evening was more of an event, rather than a meal.

While I was glad I waited because my enjoyment of the meal was made more so by my delay, I don't want to wait long before I return.

## **TRADITION BY PASCAL**

**ADDRESS:** 1000 N. Bristol St., Newport Beach

**PHONE:** (949) 263-9400

**WEBSITE:** [www.pascalnpb.com](http://www.pascalnpb.com)

**CUISINE:** French

**SPECIALTY DISH:** Thyme crusted sea bass

**ALCOHOL SERVED:** Full bar

**ENTRÉE PRICE RANGE:** \$19 to \$35

**FAMILY FRIENDLY:** No

**CREDIT CARDS ACCEPTED:** American Express, MasterCard and Visa

**RATING:** \*\*\*\*