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Newsletter & Restaurant Reviews



676 Restaurant & Bar
Omni Chicago Hotel 4th Floor
www.omnihotels.com/FindAHotel/Chicago/Dining.aspx
676 N Michigan Ave, Chicago
312.944.7676

ITLC's Overall Rating: A
Cuisine: A Ambiance: A Service: A

Chef Michael Fusano is more than a star; he's a meteor, emblazoning the culinary skies of this city. A Southern Californian by birth, he trained at Cordon Bleu in Pasadena and soon joined Omni Hotels. He quickly became a protégé of Omni Hotels Concept Chef Robert Gadsby and took the helm of 676 in September 2005. Very lucky for Chicago. His cooking credibly embodies his mentor's "Progressive American" ideals in the kitchen: French technique; Italian freshness of product; Japanese discipline of aesthetics and plating; and American ingenuity with primarily indigenous products.

The fourth-floor crow's-nest setting is splendid, overlooking the Magnificent Mile through floor-to-ceiling windows. The room sports a *trompe l'oeil* ceiling of sky and clouds, unifying the room with the outdoors. Furnishings and decorations are a satisfying hodge-podge of design elements with an unmistakable nod to Prairie Style.

Atypical for most hotel restaurants, 676 delivers at each mealtime. Dinnertime, however, is when Chef Michael's genius is most evident. The appetizers (\$11-17), fresh raw bar/crudo/charcuterie selections (\$11-18), flatbreads (\$12-15), entrées (\$26-45), and desserts (\$6-9) are most enticing, diners would do well to consider the Chef's Five Course Discovery Tasting (\$58, paired with wines for an additional \$35). It's one of this town's great bargains for an exquisite meal in a gorgeous setting. We couldn't resist.

Velvety butternut squash soup with mashed potatoes, confit of chicken and microgreens began our discovery. The (deconstructed) yellow fin tuna "martini" contained the most delicious tuna roll preparation in memory. The tuna is flash-seared and shocked in ice-cold sake or gin, three times. Seems like overkill, but the result is ecstasy on the palate.

Diver sea scallops followed, wrapped in edible tempura-fried soy paper and garnished with caviar, microgreens and paprika-smoked salt. The mix of flavors, textures and wafting aromas was intoxicating.

The roasted Peking duck with fresh morel mushrooms and Japanese tamago (sweetened egg) was whimsically served under cover of a glass butter dish.

Dessert was served with equal whimsy and elegance. A hollow Lucite log votive candle holder was filled inside with smooth river stones. The dimpled votive holders on top each held single bites of four desserts, illuminated by a single votive candle. The ginger-flavored panna cotta was delicious, if a bit stiff.

Breakfast M-F 6:30-11:30, Sa-Su 7-Noon

Lunch M-F 11:30-2:30

Dinner Su-Th 5-10, F-Sa 5-11

Brunch Sa-Su Noon-3

Validated Parking \$10 for 3 Hours