

THE POST OAK GRILL

1415 South Post Oak, Houston Texas 77056

This busy restaurant (and bar) has stood the test of time, and has become something of an institution in the Galleria area. Personable and gregarious chef-owner Polo is everywhere at once, greeting guests and turning out marvelous off-the-menu creations seemingly at the same time. Well-known for being a prime “power lunch” setting, the Post Oak Grill’s evenings are not so bad either, especially since George and Barbara, who live just down the street, are likely to pop in when the former First Lady doesn’t feel like cooking at home. Post Oak Grill does a booming take-out business in addition to its table service, with such items as jumbo lump crabcake with roasted red bell pepper sauce, poblano pepper soup, and blackened shrimp, scallop and calamari salad. Favorite main courses include seared rare Asian tuna with ginger soy, jasmine rice, and Asian-style vegetables, and “skirts on fire”: grilled flank steak over herb mashed potatoes, spinach, and smoked chipotle demi-glace. Wines are priced fairly, and there is always the bar, where clients ‘d’un certain age’ are meeting and greeting and drinking and dancing the night away.

ANTICA OSTERIA

2311 Bissonnet, Houston Texas 77005

A relative newcomer to Houston’s restaurant scene, this intimate and busy Italian restaurant has already built – by word of mouth – a dedicated and loyal clientele. Across from Kay’s Lounge on Bissonnet, Antica Osteria occupies what appears to be the many cozy rooms of two old homes side-by-side, giving one the impression of dining with an Italian friend, and not so much in a restaurant. Starters include marinated eggplant with sun-dried tomatoes and goat cheese, pan-seared scallops with prosciutto and fresh sage, and hearty bean and pasta soup. A wide selection of salads includes spiced arugula with tomatoes, olive oil and balsamic vinegar. The pasta selection is superb, including Sardinian pasta sautéed with sausage and peppers. In addition to an ever-changing board of daily specials – I can never resist the osso bucco with risotto – is a mouth-watering standard menu, which features the likes of duck breast pan-fried with crushed black pepper and fresh herbs, veal sautéed with artichokes, mushrooms, and rosemary, with porcini mushrooms, tomatoes, and fresh basil, or with prosciutto, sage, and a light wine sauce. Reservations recommended for weekends, and prices are reasonable.

Hankamer Wine Tip of the Month: Some restaurants are now exploiting customers’ expectation that the “House Wine” will be the most reasonably priced wine on the list – when the bill comes, the customer sees he has been scammed by the unscrupulous restaurant, which has given its expensive wines the moniker “House Wine.”

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Note: By way of qualifications for reviewing restaurants, Hankamer has owned and operated numerous restaurants, coffee shops, hotels, discotheques and banquet halls over the last forty years; he has travelled to over 70 countries and has studied and lived in Europe for over three years; he was co-owner of a home delivery wine of the month club and imported his own wine labels for years.

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