

The Eyes of the Customer:

TusCA Restaurant



Hyatt Regency Santa Clara

Thursday, June 10, 2010



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I decided to go to TusCA Restaurant in the Hyatt Regency since it is close to home and I had never been there before. TusCA is a restaurant in the Hyatt Regency serving western Italian cuisine from the region of Tuscany using fresh California ingredients (hence the name). As I walked up to the entrance of TusCA around 6:15PM on Thursday night, I was greeted by the hostess who was friendly but not really trained well in communicating with guests. She was perhaps overly friendly, especially with some of the small talk she was trying to make as she seated me – which left me a little uncomfortable. She seated me at a two-top table along the back, glass wall that looks into the patio service area. I decided to sit with my back to the wall so that I could have a good view of the restaurant.

The server came by shortly and introduced himself and asked if I would like to order something to drink. I hadn't made up my mind yet so he asked if I would like a glass of water while I decided. The busboy came by shortly afterwards and brought me some water. By the time the server came back I had decided on a glass of Chianti Riserva, the organic vegetable salad, and the cioppino. He informed me that the salad was made with root vegetables to which I agreed sounded good. The busboy then came by with some bread and some olive oil, roasted garlic, and white bean dip which he explained was for me to have a choice with the bread. Then the server brought me my glass of wine.

As I snacked on the bread and different dips I sat back and looked around. The restaurant was very businesslike in its décor, similar to the hotel lobby (wood and low lighting). However, it did bring in a little industrial tech look from the metal or aluminum ceiling. It had an open, clean feeling and had a comfortable atmosphere. I noticed that the servers and busboys were friendly and attentive without being intrusive. However, I noticed that when it came to the details of fine service they were not really trained. I saw one server set down a plate from the left of the guest

using his right hand, which caused his arm to be a couple of inches from the guest's face (you should serve with the left hand when serving from the left to avoid that issue). I noticed the hostess being friendly but again being awkward with her conversations with guests. I also heard her asks a group of ladies, "How are you guys". That was listed in a recent survey as the number two thing guests hate from restaurant service. The servers were not really trained with what was in the menu item and mine had to go ask the chef twice.

These are small things but can make a big difference in the overall experience. If I had been at Parcel 104 where the price point is much higher and my expectations are much higher, those things would have been deal breakers. However, the price point here is lower and this seemed to be more of a casual restaurant. The server and busboy both were friendly and treated me just like everyone else in the restaurant (mostly 2 to 5 people per table). So overall I felt comfortable and enjoyed the experience – the details did not matter so much here.

The food was also very good. The bread was good and fresh but was made better when dipped in the olive oil and eaten with one of the roasted garlic cloves. The vegetable salad was delicious even though it was different from what the server had told me at first. When he brought it to me he said the chef told him that a woman guest didn't like it, so they changed some of the vegetables so that it wasn't all root vegetables. Again, in the details, the servers should already have this information from the chef. However, it didn't violate truth in menu since the menu just called it "Organic Vegetable Salad" and it was still very delicious. The Cioppino was also tasty but was more of a pasta dish or "frutte de mare" instead of a San Francisco Cioppino as I had been expecting. However, that was my expectation and not what the menu really called out – it was more of a Tuscany style Cioppino.

I noticed all the guests were enjoying themselves, and people seemed to be enjoying the food. I also noticed that this restaurant really serves the hotel guests. It looked as if I was the only outside guest dining at the restaurant. I realized that people could enjoy themselves at dinner as long as they set the right expectation for the type of restaurant they were at. Here, it seemed that having a friendly and attentive staff, comfortable atmosphere, and good food was what the expectation was and what was received by the guests.