



LIVE

OC

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LIVE OC'S COMPLETE

THEATER GUIDE :

GREEN DAY

SUMMER SPORTS :

FALL FASHION

RECAP :

ASA: SUPERGIRL JAM



RESTAURANT REVIEW: ZIMZALA

Writer>>Dalia van den Boogaard

It's a fun word to say and a fun restaurant to frequent: Zimzala, in the Shorebreak Hotel in Huntington Beach. Defined by Riptionary as "Free-spirited person who finds peace with the sand between their toes," Zimzala combines the friendly seaside vibe of its PCH location with the exotic allure of its authentic Mediterranean-coast cuisine. Three words to describe it? Uncommon, uncomplicated, and unforgettable!

With a menu designed for sharing, Zimzala is equally ideal for romantic dinners or boisterous group get-togethers. Within stylish yet unpretentious interiors, guests can enjoy handcrafted cocktails and lighter fare in the casual "living room" lounge, or they can adjourn to the spacious dining room, with a view of the semi-exhibition kitchen. Zimzala also offers a private dining room with an inviting stone fireplace and outdoor dining on the terrace.



Food and Beverage Director Sean Crume says that the healthful dishes are "accessible" but prepared with a high level of quality. Executive Chef Vince Muraco collaborated with award-winning cookbook author Joyce Goldstein to create Zimzala's menu, focusing on seafood, vegetables, and grains and also showcasing distinctive lamb and beef dishes. During extensive travels, Muraco got a keen sense of a culture's palate by sampling its street food. Inspired to develop a coastal Mediterranean menu of both popular goodies and traditional specialties, Muraco says, "If you came to my house for dinner, this is the kind of meal I'd serve you. This is how I like to eat."

On a recent Saturday evening, my husband and I followed our server's recommendations and started with the Number One-selling dish on the menu, Zimzala Mezze, a.k.a. "The Spaceship:" a piquant, multi-tiered assortment of hummus; Mediterranean vegetable salads; pita pockets stuffed with feta and herbs; and plump, pastry-wrapped, cheese-filled "Moroccan Cigars." Next, we split the exquisitely spiced House-

Made Chorizo Stone Oven Flatbread with caramelized onions, manchego cheese, and piquillo peppers. How can we eat ordinary pizza after this? For our main courses, we shared the savory Moroccan Chicken Tagine, with preserved lemon, olives, and golden couscous; tender Grilled Lamb Kebabs, marinated in pomegranate and red wine, with rice, lentils, and caramelized onions; and tangy Orecchiette Pasta, with eggplant, onion, tomatoes, olives, and smoked mozzarella. Our sensational side of Brussels Sprouts Fritto, cloaked in delicate, crisp batter, was my favorite dish.

That is, until the dessert! Don't miss the beloved Mediterranean treat, Chocolate Ganache, with grilled sourdough bread, olive oil, and sea salt. Also noteworthy are the pillowy, peach-laden Almond Semolina Cake and the luscious Lemon Curd Tart with fresh raspberries and crème fraîche.

Christopher, our knowledgeable sommelier, paired our dishes with just the right wines. Standouts were the Layer Cake Primitivo Zinfandel and Rosenblum Cellars Viognier.

Dining at Zimzala takes you to the ports of the Mediterranean without flying you out of the OC. A perfect place to unwind, a superb place to embark upon a culinary adventure, Zimzala is beyond what Crume calls "a gift to the residents of Huntington Beach" – it's a gift to all the residents and visitors of Orange County. ☺

Zimzala
Shorebreak Hotel, 2nd level
500 Pacific Coast Highway
Huntington Beach
714-960-5050
www.restaurantzimzala.com
Check web for breakfast/brunch hours

Lunch (Weekdays): Mon.-Fri.,
11:30 a.m.-3 p.m.
Dinner: Sun.-Thu., 6-10 p.m.
Fri.-Sat., 6-11 p.m.
Lounge: Sun.-Thu., 11:30 a.m.-11 p.m.
Fri.-Sat., 11:30 a.m.-12 midnight
(Bar menu available all day)