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Agora
CHURRASCARIA

WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE OPENING OF A NEW
BRAZILIAN-STYLE STEAK HOUSE, AGORA CHURRASCARIA.
PLEASE JOIN US FOR A FEAST.

1830 MAIN STREET (CROSS MACARTHUR BLVD.) IRVINE, CA 92614
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Agora Churrascaria Cooking Up Brazilian Barbecue

Soft-shell Crabs From Chesapeake Bay Add More Flavor to Bluewater Grill's Seafood Menu

A new Brazilian steakhouse, **Agora Churrascaria**, has popped onto our dining scene in Irvine. We all have to practice saying the name and I'm betting we'll quickly shorten it to Agora.

The restaurant comes by way of **Choon Cho** and **Dan Kim**, owners of a fashion company in Seoul, South Korea. You might be wondering how that translates into opening a Brazilian eatery in Orange County.

Well, they spent many years in Brazil, where the Kim family owned restaurants in São Paulo. Those experiences inspired Cho and Kim to bring Brazilian churrascaria (barbecue) cooking to Southern California. Kim's son, **Scott Im**, handles key management and operation responsibilities at Agora Churrascaria.

Churrascaria food incorporates the cooking of various meats, including chicken, pork, lamb, sausages and many cuts of beef over an open fire. But, before we get to the meat, poultry or seafood courses, there are salad and vegetable bars and a hot food bar to visit.

On the cold food bar, you will find gravlax, shrimp cocktail, salad greens, roasted beets, eggplant salad, artichokes, hearts of palm, asparagus, pickled shiitake mushrooms, endive, potato salad, sliced tomatoes, steamed broccoli, marinated yellow and red bell peppers, seasoned cucumbers, pickled onions, and a selection of cold cuts and fine cheeses, among other choices.

The hot food bar features a not-to-miss black bean and meat stew called feijoada, the national dish of Brazil. Other items parading along the pathway of food include clams with olive oil and white wine, chicken stroganoff,

garlic rice, white fish, sautéed collard greens and a daily soup.

Now it's time for the entree. Here comes your gaucho, uniformed just as a true gaucho on the pampas would be, to carve your selected meats and/or poultry from their impaled state on skewers. They also serve the Brazilian cheese bread, mashed potatoes and fried bananas at the table.

Service is as attentive as you need. Each guest is given a green and red-sided circular disc to summon the waiter or not. The green side signals the gaucho that service is needed, while red means that you are just fine.

The wine list is 50 labels strong—the major part being California wines, a few from South America and some French champagne for Gallic flavor.

This is a place where you really should try some of the South American-themed cocktails such as a Brazilian cosmo, mohito carnival, girl from Ipanema, caipirinha or batida. All of the aforementioned make use of the Brazilian sugarcane liqueur called cachaca. The martini sophisticate also will find a good selection of gin and vodka-based favorites.

Agora is a big and very attractive restaurant. Walls are lined with river rock, complemented by soaring 25-foot peaked cathedral ceilings with skylights that are supported by massive cedar beams. Floors combine Italian slate with carpeting. Earthy colors mingle with yellow and cinnamon red accents

throughout. Big though it is, the restaurant still manages a coziness and a clean, urbane aura. It's modern Brazil mingling nicely with the spirit of old gaucho Brazil.

Agora serves lunch and dinner every day. Adult lunch is \$19, child's lunch \$11. Adult prix fixe dinner is \$35, child's dinner \$19. Salad bar only also is available: Lunch \$15 and dinner \$23. Agora Churrascaria: 1830 Main St. (at McArthur Boulevard), Irvine, (949) 222-9910.

Bluewater Grill's Latest Delicacy

Soft-shell crab season is here again. And, where better to enjoy them than at **Bluewater Grill's** two OC locations, Newport Beach and South Coast Plaza Village. These delicacies are flown in fresh from the Chesapeake Bay each soft-shell season, which is marked by the first full moon in May through early fall.

Bluewater is preparing the tender crabs two ways. There's the classic version—sprinkled with Old Bay seasoning and sautéed in butter, then topped with capers and lemon. The more contemporary approach features them dipped in a panko (ultra fine Japanese breadcrumbs) batter and then flash fried so they're crunchy on the outside but bursting with sweet tender crab flavor on the inside.

I found the information on soft-shells, provided by the restaurant, so interesting that I'd like to share some of it with you. The Blue Claw variety of crabs is native to the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Male crabs are called jimmies and females are she-crabs when immature and sooks when mature. Soft-shells are the crabs that have just shed their shells in order to grow a newer and larger

shell. The fishermen who earn a living by crabbing, oystering and general fishing are called watermen.

Most blue crabs are caught in crab pots or large wire cages with several sections. The crabber puts bait in the bottom of the cage and drops it into the water, with a float marking location and owner of the cage. The crab enters the cage and tries to escape by swimming up. This causes it to move into an upper section of the cage and it is trapped. A crabber might work as many as 500 traps in a day.

As most of you know by now, Bluewater Grills print a menu daily to reflect the fresh fish that arrive from around the world. There are so many varieties of both fish and shellfish, cooked in a manner to suit you: grilled, sautéed, broiled and in the case of some shellfish, in a broth. One other thing: They have a very decent wine list at very reasonable prices. At least 70% of the wines are under \$35 a bottle.

Life is casual and relaxing in the Cape Cod-like atmosphere, which is the décor trademark. It's the best kind of meal when we can sit down in such comfy and friendly surroundings and have specialties like soft-shell crab and so many kinds of fresh water and saltwater seafood, plus some steaks, lamb, burgers and chicken.

Both lunch and dinner are served and the Newport Beach restaurant also has an a la carte Sunday brunch. Lunch entrees \$7.95 to \$16.50. Dinner entrees \$10.75 to \$22.50. Bluewater Grill: 1621 W. Sunflower Ave. (South Coast Plaza Village), Santa Ana, (714) 546-3474 and 630 Lido Park Drive (Cannery Village), Newport Beach, (949) 675-3474.



EXECUTIVE DINING

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