

Duck Dive ready to ride the wave of summer

by DAVE SCHWAB

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Beer-battered Mahi tacos at Duck Dive in Pacific Beach. COURTESY PHOTO

Named for a surfing maneuver, Duck Dive in Pacific Beach is gearing up for the busy summer season as the pandemic wanes.

A Hennessey's in a past life, Duck Dive at 4650 Mission Blvd. has been owned and operated by Thomas Winn for the past nine years, who is now working alongside his wife Rebekah.

Winn talked about his apprenticeship as a restaurateur.

"I worked for Paul Hennessey as an assistant manager for about seven or eight years in the Gaslamp Quarter," he said. "When I found out he was looking to sell this PB location, I called Paul and asked to sit down and talk with him about buying. That's how it all started."

After the sale was consummated, Winn and his business partners performed a major overhaul of the eatery. "We did a total gut of the inside and a complete remodel," he said, adding the former Hennessey's was transformed into a neighborhood beach lounge with a handcrafted surf ceiling and custom surf-inspired art.

Then came the time to figure out a new identity and brand for the establishment. "The idea was just to rifle off names and we took turns with names we thought would fit into a concept," Winn said. "We came to surf terms and duck dive, when you paddle out and take your board and nosedive under the wave, came up."

Then it was a matter of matching the restaurant's new name with its décor.

"Originally, we had surfboards cut up into a honeycomb-shaped bar top," Winn said. "One of the walls was wrapped in a picture we had a friend do. We had another photo of a girl duck diving in a wave crashing off Hawaii. It was what we wanted to do: something new and fresh for a beach lounge with coastal cuisine where people could come to have a good meal and hang out."

Of the eatery's cuisine, Winn noted: "We have tacos. Duck Dive's burgers are really well known as well as our sandwiches. We also have oysters and surf-and-turf filets with lobster tails. The menu has evolved and changed over the years. We've had sea bass and pork chops on the menu. Right now our brunch is a big hit."

Duck Dive's current menu serving all three daily meals features a diverse array of items including breakfast burritos and omelets, avocado toast, chorizo hash, French toast, wings, shrimp ceviche, ahi poke, tacos, burgers, chicken sandwiches, grilled fresh fish, and salads.

Two dessert favorites are churros con caramel with chocolate dipping sauce and chocolate chip pazookie served with ice cream.

Enduring the pandemic was admittedly tough, but Winn is encouraged by signs that "people are wanting to get out and dine, have some drinks and a meal and spend time together.

"We've had a lot of our regulars coming back," said Winn pointing out his clientele is a mix of supportive locals and tourists from all around who come annually for the summer prime time.

"We have repeat customers from Arizona and elsewhere who, when they come back to the beach, they come back to Duck Dive," said Winn adding, "Memorial Day is always a big weekend for us and a kick-off for summer."

Winn credits his long-term employees for much of his success. "My management team and staff has been amazing," he said. "That has been really key for us, being able to keep doing what we're doing. I'm very thankful for my staff."

Duck Dive

Where: 4650 Mission Blvd.

Hours: Wednesdays-Fridays 10 a.m.-10 p.m. Saturdays-Sundays 9 a.m.-10 p.m. Closed Mondays and Tuesdays.

Contact: theduckdive.com, 858-273-3825.

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