

DESIGN OVERVIEW

SAPPHIRE LAGUNA: DETAILS MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

Intriguing Design Sets the Stage At Laguna's Newest Oceanfront Restaurant

Globe-trotting Chef Azmin Ghahreman has landed in Laguna Beach, and unveiled his dream restaurant, Sapphire Laguna. He has joined forces with Teller Architects to mastermind an intimate and inviting venue with a funky, yet chic California beach motif – offering internationally inspired cuisine with fine imported and farm-fresh local ingredients.

The anticipated new restaurant – overlooking the Pacific Ocean – is a unique testament to Laguna Beach culture and history. In this spirit, Ghahreman has poured his heart and soul into this rustic, yet richly appointed jewel by the sea, with highlights including:

- **Historic Roots.** Sapphire is situated on the site of the original Pottery Shack, an iconic purveyor of pottery and art for nearly 60 years. Visitors are welcomed by a reinstalled statue of Eiler Larsen – one of Laguna's famed "greeters."
- **California Beach Chic.** Chief architect Si Teller used an abundance of warm, organic materials, including elements from the previous structure – deriving his inspiration from the original Pottery Shack, which he describes as "an example of the early California fruit stand architecture prevalent along the coast until the mid-1960s." The end result is a warm and inviting indoor/outdoor venue with a decidedly California vibe, global élan and a hip, cosmopolitan edge.
- **Fine Touches.** Teller recruited Holly Mandot, a fine artist from New Orleans, to infuse subtle details into the design scheme, including Afro-Cuban-inspired stenciling on wooden beam accents, glazed and textured accent walls with a "burnt lime" hue, and a distressed terracotta wall finish in both bathrooms. Mandot's *pièce de résistance*: a detailed Cuban Heida – a spiritual emblem that allows the good spirits in – which graces a wood beam atop the busy front entryway.
- **Local Art.** In a fitting tribute to its predecessor, Sapphire is adorned with striking pieces of ceramics and pottery, as well as beautiful fine art by local artists, including color-splashed plein air pieces by John Eagle, French style paintings by Wendy Johnson and hand blown glassworks by famed local artist John Barber.

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- **Luxe Lighting.** Rich layered lighting for depth and drama sets the stage – with vibrant accent lights to lend “subtle energy,” an extraordinary beaded and hammered metal Moroccan chandelier and nine whimsical hand blown glass light fixtures created by John Barber. Evoking an “Afro-Cuban” aura, these custom-designed fixtures lend a sense of mystery and adventure to the main dining room and are enhanced by graceful glass lamps atop the bar, which emit a soft tangerine glow. Hand-blown blue accent lights dot the area between the bar and the main dining room, while the wine wall is bedecked with fluted fixtures with soft lilac silk shades.
- **Wine Barrel Chic.** Fine woodworker Gary Shuetz performed his wizardry throughout the venue, which boasts distressed reclaimed mountain ash flooring, Douglas fir furniture and dark wood beam accents. A rustic wine wall – resembling a giant basket-weaving – is comprised of 500 oak wine barrel staves and conceals seven temperature controlled walk-in wine cellars housing more than 900 bottles.
- **A Redwood Relic.** A 14-foot-long wooden bar top hand-finished by Shuetz and fabricated from a nearly 400-year-old redwood slab is characterized by a beautiful luminescent-three dimensional texture.
- **Gourmet Goodies To Go.** Anchored by an enclosed cheese humidor – made with restored doors salvaged from an early 1900s Greene and Greene Pasadena Craftsman home – the adjacent Sapphire Pantry retains the timeworn feel of an old country store. Other highlights here: a fun farm animal motif, vintage subway tiles and 7-inch-wide mountain ash flooring.
- **Al Fresco Dining.** Outdoor diners enjoy a dwarf Pine tree and the warmth of a massive outdoor fire pit with twinkling sea glass accents.

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