



SAVORING • *sans* • GLUTEN

*EUROPEAN-CALIFORNIAN BISTRO, LILAC
MONTECITO, PROVES YOU DO NOT NEED GLUTEN
TO CREATE DELICIOUS DISHES*

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On Coast Village Road, a new culinary haven has bloomed, where European tradition meets Californian innovation. Lilac Montecito, the sophisticated sister to Lilac Patisserie, known for its gluten free French-inspired delights in downtown Santa Barbara, has made her grand debut. Co-owners and dynamic husband-wife duo Gillian and Alam Muralles lead the charge alongside their talented Head Chef, Simone.

Lilac Montecito isn't just a restaurant; it's a testament to passion, dedication, and the art of gluten-free fine dining. For Chef Simone, who hails from a small town near Milan, Italy, crafting exquisite dishes in a gluten-free kitchen is a labor of love. "I like the project and the challenge of working in a gluten-free restaurant," he confides.

For Gillian, the journey to Lilac Montecito is deeply personal. Raised in a family where the love of cooking ran deep, her path took an unexpected turn when she was diagnosed with celiac disease at a young age. Undeterred, her passion for cooking led her to pursue formal culinary education, where she met her husband, Alam, who shared the dream of opening a fine dining restaurant.

The Muralless envisioned a dining experience that is both comforting and elevated, one that you would never know is crafted in a gluten-free kitchen. "We try to market our businesses as restaurants first, gluten-free second," Gillian explains.





YELLOWTAIL CRUDO

Gillian's words ring true as my companion and I step onto the elegant restaurant's white tile floors. Greeted by soothing jazz melodies, the ambiance blends Parisian chic with California charm. Evening light streaming through a wall of black iron square windows casts a soft glow over the space. We nestle into a petite table adorned by bistro chairs, and our attentive server, Anne Marie, welcomes us warmly, explaining that every dish is prepared fresh. Throughout the meal she ensures that our glasses remain filled and our every need is catered to.

After a few recommendations and placing our order, Gillian herself graces our table, adding a personal touch to our dining experience. With a flourish, she presents us with a basket of dinner rolls, a simple gesture that speaks volumes about the care and attention to detail that define Lilac Montecito's ethos. "It's one of my favorite jobs," she confides with a grin.

Soon after, the Yellowtail Crudo is placed before us, and a creamy avocado mousse with lime coconut milk is beautifully poured over it. The buttery fish is wrapped in a tight spiral in the center of the plate, now swimming in the light green sauce, along with candied celery sprinkled on top, resulting in a refreshing contrast between acidity and sweetness.

Next comes the Arancino, featuring a delightful medley of flavors and textures. A crunchy exterior ball of saffron risotto gives way to a warm ragu alla bolognese within, perched on a velvety bed of pea puree. The presentation is stunning, with elegant garnishes of vibrant microgreens and edible flowers.

For our main course, we are presented with a culinary masterpiece: the Duck Breast. The sous vide duck breast melts in our mouths. The skin boasts a delightful crispiness, while the succulent meat remains tender and flavorful. Nestled around the carefully carved slices of duck are two variations of butternut squash. One takes the form of pickled cubes, providing a tangy contrast,

while the other appears as a velvety puree, dotted in vibrant orange hues across the plate. Amidst this tapestry of flavors, dark dots of licorice sauce add an intriguing depth, perfectly complementing the accompanying broccoli romano's earthiness. Each bite is a revelation, a harmonious blend of savory and sweet, rich and tangy.

The Kabocha Ravioli is another standout dish. Fresh ravioli are handmade in-house, filled with creamy ricotta, smothered in a buttery pumpkin sauce, and topped with fried sage and amaretti crumble. Each bite is as decadent as the last.

To culminate our culinary journey, we savor the Key Lime Tart—a round confection with a crisp pastry shell embracing the lime filling, topped with a cloud of whipped cream.

Equally delightful is the Chocolate Lava Cake, a miniature marvel that beckons with indulgent allure. As we pierce its tender exterior, a river of molten chocolate cascades forth. A scoop of velvety vanilla gelato crowns the amaretti crumble, contrasting the dots of raspberry coulis. Each bite is unique, with the chocolate complementing the tangy berry and sweet cream.

From the savory duck to refreshing crudo, each dish is a testament to Chef Simone's culinary expertise and Gillian's commitment to creating a dining experience that is accessible to all. "I want this to be a place where everyone can come and enjoy," Gillian shares. "It's nice to be a restaurant where people who are gluten-free can eat the bread and participate in these dining experiences that are such a part of being in a community."

As a gluten-free individual myself, I am thrilled to genuinely say that I felt like I had a night where I indulged in gluten heaven without actually doing so. My companion and I bid farewell to Lilac Montecito with promises to return, knowing we would dream of our divine ravioli and being able to eat the bread basket.*



BERRY PATCH CAKE

CHOCOLATE LAVA CAKE

