

[Restaurant](#) Fri Apr 19 2013

[Eating at the Top](#)

By Danielle Snow

[The John Hancock Building](#) is basically Chicago's answer to the Eiffel Tower, with all of the same reasons for renown: it's a landmark seen across the city boasting spectacular views and a swanky restaurant at the top. However, in the past said restaurant -- [the Signature Room](#) on the 95th, so named for its roost 95 floors above ground -- has delivered more impressively on window seats rather than on actual menu fare. The Signature Room celebrates its 20th anniversary this summer and has marked the occasion with the addition of a new executive chef: Rosalia Barron, previously of Frontera Grill and NAHA -- the Signature Room's first female chef. I was invited to come sample some of the new offerings.



The Tuesday evening that I dined was densely foggy, so the view was obscured by a wall of that orangey-brown mist that seems to cloak downtown Chicago in times of adverse weather (my out-of-town friends, especially those from more rural areas, are always baffled by the off-putting color of the night sky here. I honestly had never taken notice). Service was friendly and attentive throughout service, and my dining partner and I only took fault with one aspect of the drinks menu: the beer list is painfully devoid of local Chicago beer options, except for a few Goose Island selections. So many tourists cycle through this restaurant on a daily basis -- it's a shame that their beer choices are mostly limited to standard domestic labels.

The food menu has definitely retained a touch of the "old-school" elegance that the Signature Room has always been known for, and includes menu staples such as a Seafood Tower and Herb Roasted Chicken served with potatoes and carrots -- either charmingly traditional or stubbornly outdated, depending on your viewpoint. However, execution is key. If you're looking for a perfectly cooked piece of meat the likes of which your trendy neighborhood joint hasn't quite mastered, then the Signature Room will wow you.

But if you're a more adventurous eater, the new menu has carved out a space for you, too: opt for the Monthly Signature Menu, the proceeds of which benefit a rotating Chicago-based charity (this month, the [Chicago Children's Advocacy Center](#)). This fluctuating menu allows more room for creativity on the part of the chef, and my dining partner and I thoroughly enjoyed the King Crab Risotto (small portion size, but flavorful and attractively plated), the Minestrone soup (not a standout, but fresh and appropriate for spring) and the Grilled Lamb Porterhouse (generous helping, gorgeously cooked). The Duck Trio -- comprised of a crisp duck thigh, liver mousse and seared foie gras with a knockout rhubarb sauce -- was a hit between us, and although I usually shy away from eating meat, I made a rare exception (all in the name of fair and unbiased review, of course). For my own meat-free entrée, I chose the Yukon Gold Potato Gnocchi, which was rich and decadent, but could have benefited from a bit of refinement and some greener, acidic flavors.

Overall, our experience was lovely -- spot-on food with impeccable service, although we both sorely missed the view. Is this where you want to go for the most unexpected, local, of-the-moment flavors? Probably not. But is this better than previous expectations? Yes -- the Signature Room isn't just a venue for a view, it stands up as a restaurant in its own right.

*[The Signature Room at the 95th](#)
875 N. Michigan Ave.*

http://gapersblock.com/drivethru/2013/04/19/eating_at_the_top/