

Created by: Debra C. Argen

Aquavit Grill and Raw Bar

Another new restaurant to make its culinary debut in [Stockholm, Sweden](#) is **Marcus Samuelsson's Aquavit Grill & Raw Bar**, which opened in February 2008. Head **Chef Martin Brag** clearly shines in this sleek, contemporary restaurant, and as the name implies, there are great Aquavit infused cocktails.

If you are unfamiliar with Marcus Samuelsson's culinary vision, you might think from the name, that Aquavit Grill & Raw Bar would serve traditional Swedish recipes, which could not be further from the truth. While the menu is anything but traditional Swedish cuisine, it is very innovative and definitely very good.

Edward F. Nesta and I had the opportunity to have dinner at the restaurant in May 2008, and entering the restaurant, one of the first things that caught my eye were the glass containers containing colorful fruit and spice infusions lining the dividing wall reminiscent of Aquavit in New York. Seeing all those containers filled with what I knew would be delicious flavors, tempted Edward F. Nesta and I to sample their potent potables.



The cocktail menu is extensive and creative, and Jeanette, the friendly face behind the bar, expertly made Edward a Scandinavian Martini, made with Orange Lemon Vodka, Cloudberry Liqueur, and Dry Vermouth, while I indulged in their "Straight from New York" Bird Bath Cocktail made with Grapefruit-Lemongrass Vodka, Lemon Juice, Pomegranate, Pineapple Juice, and Angostura Bitters. When I saw the size of my very tasty cocktail, I realized why it was aptly named, as it required two hands to hold it.

Chef Martin, who trained at Aquavit in New York, explained that the dining concept at the restaurant is not fine dining, but rather has a more relaxed atmosphere with Stockholm's first raw bar at the midpoint of the restaurant as a central focus. The restaurant is long and sleek, with contemporary design elements, bare wood table tops standing on metal legs are accessorized with artistic pewter candle holders, and small ceramic pots holding the

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first signs of spring: tiny branches of pussy willows. The restaurant has a wall of glass along one side of the restaurant, and sheer floor to ceiling fabric line the opposite wall. A long wood wall displaying a row of Aquavit infusions and tall green varying height vases holding alliums added visual appeal, and acts as a divider separating the dining room into two dining spaces, and a long rectangular table with tall bistro leather back stools offer larger parties an inviting place to call their own. Crystal vase lights stylishly illuminate the room. There are textured high banquettes in the back of the dining room, and large-scale black and white photographs add interest on the back wall of the restaurant.

To begin our evening, Chef Martin sent us an Amuse Bouche of Gazpacho with diced cucumber and crunchy croutons served in tall shot glasses, and roasted cashew nuts that were seasoned with pepper and chili, which were perfect to enjoy with our cocktails. Next came a cloth bag filled with an assortment of rolls, muffins and crisp breads accompanied with a chickpea and parsley puree with olive oil.



As a starter, Edward had the Wagyu Ravioli with tarot root and shiitake mushrooms (Wagyu Ravioli -taroroot, shiitake) paired with NV Pomeroy Brut Royal Champagne, that was beautifully presented as wagyu beef ravioli filled with tarot root puree and accompanied with fingerling potatoes with brisket, truffles, palm heart salad, green papaya, shiitake mushrooms, garnished with walnuts and mint. Chef Martin Brag served this course himself and poured the shitake broth around the beef tableside. This course had lots of textures and flavors with the crunchiness of the green papaya in the salad, the slightly chewy mushrooms, and the garlic flavored potatoes, that were well combined to make this a tasty and interesting recipe.



I selected the Lobster Roll and Ginger Ale Granité, (Hummerrulle - ginger ale granite) paired with 2006 Kaesler Old Vine Riesling, Barossa Valley, South Australia, Australia, which was another attractive course that was presented as lobster salad with mint and coriander aioli wrapped in a thinly sliced and pickled Asian pear, and garnished with avruga caviar, micro herbs and Spanish almonds; and ginger ale granite with vodka served in a shot glass, which was a perfect palate cleanser after the lobster.

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For his main course, Edward selected the Spring Lamb with broccoli and apple (Dilamm - broccoli, apple) presented as lamb rolled in pumpkin seeds, slowly cooked in duck fat, and then shredded to make a roll, served with dill foam, broccoli puree, apple puree, and caramelized apple. This course was paired with 2005 Château de Chamirey, Mercurey, Hautes Côtes de Beaune, Burgundy, which really complemented the lamb.



I had the Seafood Stew with saffron, dill broth, and potatoes (Fiskgryta - saffron - och dillbuljong, potais) a lovely mix of seared scallops, two panko breaded and fried filets Haddock, sweet Japanese shrimp, mussels, and diced potatoes, and garnished with long curls of cucumbers and a peeled and pickled tomato. The mussel broth with green peas flavored with saffron and dill was poured tableside. I loved the contrasting flavors in this recipe with the vinegary pickled tomato and the slightly sweet foam, and the rich broth, which complemented the mélange of seafood, and was well paired with an organic 2005 Bonterra Chardonnay, Bonterra Vineyards, Mendocino County, California, United States.



Cloudberry is pure Scandinavia, so Edward had to experience the Cheesecake with cloudberry and vanilla (Cheesecake - hjortron, vanilj) presented as two cheesecakes that were creamy and luscious and were piped between thin layers of baked graham sheets and accompanied with two quenelles of cloudberry sorbet.



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It was rhubarb season when we had dinner at the restaurant, so I indulged in the Rhubarb fantasy with chocolate and toffee (Rabarber - choklad, kola) presented as a long rhubarb ribbon with rhubarb sticks tied into a bundle at one end of the ribbon with a quenelle of toffee salt ice cream, a quenelle of rhubarb sorbet, and sugared nuggets, and paired with a demitasse of hot chocolate on a fondant chocolate base and garnished with a creamy coconut foam and roasted coconut. This course was another winner that showcased the creative spirit of Aquavit Grill & Raw Bar.

Read about **Aquavit Grill & Raw Bar** in the **Restaurants** and **Chefs' Recipes** sections where **ChefMartin Brag** shares a few of his recipes in **English** and **Swedish**.



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