

# MODERN **LUXURY**



Ponsaty's 24-hour braised veal cheeks are served alongside a candied carrot puree and topped with a Madeira wine sauce.

## FEATURES

# Basque in the Moment

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*Master French Chef Patrick Ponsaty launches namesake restaurant in the heart of downtown Rancho Santa Fe.*

On a sunny, tree-lined stretch of Rancho Santa Fe's Paseo Delicias you'll find the recently opened Ponsaty's—a Basque-influenced restaurant offering classical French and Spanish dishes composed of locally sourced ingredients. Led by Master French Chef Patrick Ponsaty, the restaurant (formerly Delicias) has been completely transformed into an upscale yet approachable dining experience.

The eatery is made up of a series of different spaces that fall into three distinct themes. Both outdoor patios, relaxed and casual in feel, are appointed with wicker seating, white-topped

tables and punchy pops of bright orange. Lush, creeping vines fill out the lantern-lit courtyard, making it a cozy spot for an intimate gathering. Two sections of the front patio can be curtained off for private events as well. The bar, modeled after a Scottish pub, is a sophisticated space in black and brass. Tall tufted booths in shiny black leather sit across from a stone-topped bar that touts an impressive global scotch list.

The main dining room is a lofty enclave of elegance and lux. Faux-alligator chairs sit beside speckled burl wood tables along an embossed antique wall. Geometric chandeliers by Jonathan Adler illuminate the gray tufted booths along the back wall, while a glittering Schonbek sets aglow an intimate corner spot lined in deep blue velvet. This versatile space has a special table for everyone.

Dinner at Ponsaty's must begin with caviar service paired with crisp Champagne or a seasonal cocktail. One glorious ounce of Royal Shassetra Caviar arrives to the table atop a chilled glass tower of classic accoutrements. The base of the tower houses finely chopped red onions, egg whites, capers, egg yolk and chives, while the middle section holds a quenelle of rich creme fraiche. Both caviar and toppings are spooned to taste onto small, fluffy buttermilk potato pancakes. The entire experience is a sheer delight, and it just happens to be an off-the-menu item for those lucky enough to be in the know.

The meal continues with any number of inventive appetizers prepared by Ponsaty along with Executive Chef Alain Delahaye. The goat cheese crottin is a vibrant presentation of tender beets, shocking pink beet ice cream, peppery watercress and a round of crispy puff pastry topped with a tangy Laura Chenel goat cheese. A crumble of pistachio and cocoa nibs sprinkled on top adds some nice crunch. The heirloom tomato salad is a celebration of the season's finest and is made up of three small tastings: tomato sorbet paired with a tomato tartar studded with goat cheese, olives and pine nuts; chilled golden tomato water; and slices of colorful tomato and basil dressed in a shallot vinaigrette.

In a world seemingly filled with small plates for sharing, entrees defy said trend and are the main attraction at Ponsaty's. The 24-hour braised veal cheeks are impossibly tender and sauced in a savory Madeira wine sauce. Swipes of candied carrot puree infused with orange blossom surround the veal along with roasted carrots, shallots and a thin wheel of sweet, brittle orange. Tiny fennel blossoms add surprising pops of herb and anise. The halibut, topped with a frothy clam emulsion, is a pure triumph. Sitting beneath the seared fillet is a rich broth strewn with tasty morsels: smoked piquillo peppers, bits of cured chorizo and airy ricotta gnocchi green with fresh parsley.

For a sweet finish, try one (or two) of the expertly crafted desserts by Pastry Chef Bruno Albouze (of YouTube's The Real Deal Cooking Channel). Paired with a banana-lime ice cream, the chocolate bar is made of a light milk chocolate mousse beneath a glossy coat of chocolate ganache. A more traditional fruit and custard-filled gateau is served with a scoop of citrusy lemon verbena ice cream. No matter which way you go, your meal will leave you dreaming of a trip to France and Spain.



Chef Patrick Ponsaty inside his eponymous restaurant

**PONSATY'S RESTAURANT & BAR**

6106 Paseo Delicias, Rancho Santa Fe, 858.771.1871

HOURS: Dinner, Tue.-Sun., 5pm-close

PRICES: Appetizers \$14-\$21, entrees \$31-\$115, desserts \$12-\$14