

Dining Review: Highs and lows at Whole Food's High Tide Bar & Grill

Here's what customers can expect from the Amazon-Whole Foods acquisition. Time



It's easy for diners to forget they're in a grocery store at High Tide Bar & Grill, that is, until someone strolls by with a shopping cart.

Tucked in the far back corner of Whole Foods Market in Mercato in North Naples, [High Tide Bar & Grill](#) has been serving up Florida-inspired dishes since it opened in July. The 36-seat restaurant replaced the former coffee and juice bar that now shares the front corner near the main entrance.

High Tide features a menu of high-end entrees and shareable dishes with Florida flair, including seafood from the store's seafood department. Dishes include a Monsieur Cubano sandwich (\$10), steak frites (\$20) and a selection of personal, racket-shaped pizzas for \$9 each. For the more daring, diners can order Venezia Ostra caviar service for \$60.

The bar menu lists about a dozen beers on draft and selections of red, white and sparkling wines by the glass or bottle.

Retro light fixtures hang overhead, and waiters wear Hawaiian-inspired floral button-up shirts. Despite the vintage flair, High Tide still feels modern, with white subway tiled walls, high ceilings and industrial-looking beams above the entrance.

On a recent Friday evening, we slid into a blue leather booth and escaped from the bustle of a grocery store. At our waiter's suggestion, we ordered the boom boom shrimp (\$10) and buffalo chicken nachos (\$10) off the "starters" menu.

The shrimp were piled high, and the portion size made for easy sharing. The little pieces of crispy shrimp came smothered in a sweet Thai chili sauce — the perfect amount — that added a spicy kick. Scallions and sesame seeds peppered the top.

The nachos, meanwhile, featured a bed of house-made fried tortilla chips topped with crispy buffalo chicken bits, a tasty blue cheese drizzle and blue cheese crumbles. We only wish the chicken was shredded, and that chicken sure was fiery.

For dinner, one diner at our table tried the black truffled chicken breast (\$15), a thick, marinated chicken breast topped with black truffle mushrooms. The meat was tough and had all the signs of being overcooked. The sides, though, were a success, including the sautéed green beans with caramelized onion, which were wonderfully flavored, and a bowl of black truffle mac and cheese.

The baked macaroni was a huge hit at our table, with every diner digging a fork in for a bite or two or three. The cheesy top had been baked just right, and between the musky black truffle flavor and the not-too-rich cheese, this was the adult mac and cheese we all crave.

Another diner ordered the cheeseburger (\$12). The 8-ounce beef burger is topped with cheese, heirloom tomatoes and lettuce on a brioche bun. We ordered the burger medium and with red onion. Impressed initially by the sheer size of the patty, we were disappointed with its flavor and watery juices. Either from the patty or from the lettuce, the juices literally pooled onto the plate, turning the bottom bun into a soppy mess. Frankly, there are better burgers around town.

The use of black truffle continued with the side of fries, which were just right but not overly memorable.

Finally, the Nashville hot chicken sandwich (\$12) all but made up for the two other lackluster entrees. A crispy fried chicken thigh bathed in buffalo sauce came sandwiched in a seared brioche bun. The creamy slaw and bread and butter pickles made this sandwich a real treat. It was full of flavor without being overly spicy.

Smashed fingerling potatoes alongside the sandwich were crispy on the outside and smooth on the inside. The dish stirred fond memories of Southern home cooking. We'd order it again.

The atmosphere and service felt right, with retro vibes in a coastal-inspired eatery, and service was helpful. Our waiter made spot-on suggestions and kept our table clean and our drinks filled.

Ultimately, High Tide Bar & Grill had some hits and some misses, making it, well, average.

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High Tide Bar & Grill

Where: 9101 Strada Place, North Naples, inside Whole Foods Market

Hours: 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday; 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday

Prices: Starters \$4-\$60; salads \$6-\$10; entrees \$10-\$20; pizzas \$9; Norman Love Confections \$7.25

More information: 239-552-2100 ext. 248; wholefoodsmarket.com

Forks: 3 out of 5