

# Newsday

LONG ISLAND

August 19, 2007

DINING OUT

## Happiness is a new HONU

By: Peter M. Gianotti

Out of the blue comes a new Honu - smart, magnetic, white-hot.

HONU Kitchen & Cocktails, full of energy and very good food, signals a fresh direction for dining out in Long Island's changing downtowns. You can almost hear the buzz.

Restaurateur John J. Tunney III, whose winning establishments include Besito in Huntington and Roslyn, and the American Burger Co. eateries, has transformed the former Blue Honu into this sprawling space. HONU still is visually dramatic, but now both the style and the substance are smoother and more polished. And it's a good time.

On some nights, the restaurant practically pulsates as a gathering place. Late on Sunday, it's almost serene. But the service and the small-plate cuisine are fine whenever you go. If beer taps were flowing and the hours were longer, HONU would be a buoyant brasserie. As is, it's a lively example of how to keep a suburban town or city's lights on late.

HONU sends out dishes that, you're advised, are larger than appetizers and smaller than main courses. In short: ideal for sharing.

You can start with a peppery arugula salad cut with sweet watermelon and shavings of provolone; or an addictive union of prosciutto-wrapped, chevre-stuffed, honey-drizzled figs.

Or just eat them whenever you like. There's no real beginning or middle here. And that's part of the fun. Other immediate attractions: short pasta paired with cockles and chorizo sausage; rosy yellowfin tuna with Asian pear salad; a summery union of heirloom tomatoes; and a delectable side of artichokes spiked with mint.

Soft-shell crabs tastefully arrive sauteed and supported by a hillock of celeriac remoulade. Plump steamed mussels get the traditional, flavorful white wine-and-garlic treatment. Medallions of sweet lobster materialize flanked by fire-roasted corn.

There are a few speed bumps on this HOV route. Head-on shrimp finished with garlic and chiles are overcooked; "pork & peaches" doesn't really come together; risotto fritters resemble browned Ping-Pong balls, heavyweight division; Chilean sea bass with mushrooms and tomatoes underscores the basic blandness of the fish. Better are the juicy skirt steak with red onion atop a riff on romesco sauce; tender quail with

leeks and a mild cauliflower puree; hearty, short-rib-stuffed piquillo peppers; veal-and-chorizo meat balls; and a crusty macaroni and cheese that goes with all of them. The dish described as "chicken, mozzarella & tomatoes" turns into an updated, witty play on Parmigiana.

Of course, there's a Caesar salad, and it's all right. HONU also offers a three-cheese plate, at least once anchored by a creamy wedge of Pont-l'Evque.

HONU's sweets are understandably eclectic. Look for the lush, individual German chocolate cake threaded with coconut; a tangy Key lime pie; homey blueberry-and-peach cobbler; and refreshing blood-orange sorbet.

What are you waiting for?

If you like HONU Kitchen & Cocktails, you also might want to try:

City Cellar, 1080 Corporate Dr., Westbury; 516-693-5400.

Novita, 860 Franklin Ave., Garden City; 516-739-7660.

### HONU KITCHEN & COCKTAILS

363 New York Ave. Huntington  
631-421-6900 honukitchen.com

**(2 STARS)**

**CUISINE:** Eclectic

**ASSESSMENT:** Energizing downtown

**OPEN:** Dinner every day, from 5 p.m. Monday to Saturday and 3 p.m. Sunday. Reservations recommended.

**PRICE RANGE:** "Small plates," \$6 to \$16

**CREDIT CARDS:** All major cards

**NOTABLE DISHES:** Soft-shell crabs with celeri remoulade; short-rib-stuffed piquillo peppers; lobster with fire-roasted corn; macaroni and cheese

**WHEELCHAIR ACCESS:** One level

**DIRECTIONS:** West side, at Elm Street, north of Route 25A (Main Street)

Four stars mean outstanding; three, excellent; two, very good; one, good; none, fair or poor.