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MEATY CONVERSATION: Joshua Dubois and Anna Lee Egan room at Boa, where the A-listers come to dine and selt. The 63-year-old New York native, about 100 pounds, is one of the restaurant's regulars. Egan, 40, is the restaurant's captain. Photo by [unreadable]

THE REVIEW
Steak, with rare style

People-watching and dining are made for each other at Boa, a stylish new beachfront steakhouse in Santa Monica.

By **D. JAMES VICKARIA**
 food reviewer

THINK ANITA BOND may be beginning to stare. But you wouldn't know it from the number of steakhouses opening around town, with more to be planted in stages.

What gives? Despite seignior and cholesterol concerns, beef is still in.

Boa, an offshoot of the original Sunset Strip in the silver Santa Monica hot spot, everybody has to be there. At least, the room is divided in light from floor-to-ceiling windows. Cause right, left, right, left, right, cast as some glow from far overhead. And in the bar, faced in sculpted, geometric white shapes, 11 stools sit on a single or maybe single on the West side has aggregated for a drink before the area, out of view, next to get to the table.

The effect is big and glamorous. He lived large, and the crowd dresses to make an entrance. The shoes, of course, are all right. The dressers here and clothing that the camera that in how many of the tables are occupied by one or two guys with four or five women — obviously the girlfriend and her tag-along friends. From next to the vintage point, you can take in the entire room, and there's plenty of late-hopping going on from one post-bother booth to another.

Four years ago, Balboa, now rebranded as Boa, opened at the Grand Hotel on 56 and 57th and reinvigorated the steakhouse for a new generation. The owners, who also own the Stahl Bakery chain, have moved on to the burgeoning Vegas scene too.

At this dramatic beachfront steakhouse at the corner of Santa Monica Boulevard and Ocean Avenue, visitors will immediately appear from behind the small grove of distressed trees planted in the middle of the room as an art installation. Diners also come to sip outside and selt through the windows on a rainy night.

In the center of the restaurant, see-through, floor-to-ceiling shelves block out the view room, which has a tall red step-ladder standing at the ready should anybody need to fetch a bottle that's out of reach. Tucked behind is a semi-private area where a party of made-in-dusty business or business tycoons may be carrying on at the single large table. But for all the fuss about wine, the list isn't particularly impressive.

"What? You waiter will show good randomly when you try to order. He'll be stuck doing road after two hours trying to work in this noisy environment, but those servers are obligingly polite and friendly. Whatever the request, the answer is "absolutely," leaving you to wonder, over and over and over again, how that particular word has come to mean "of course," or "certainly."

The classic wedge

If you know what you want, you don't even have to glance at the menu. For some, that would be a wedge of lobster lettuce with a Peter Dinklage-like drizzle of the diluted jumbo shrimp and the best steak in the house: the prime New York strip aged 40 days. That aging doesn't come cheap. The steak is \$20, but this one may be worth it for its rich, beefy taste and marvelous chew but tender texture.

The salad is a particularly good version of the classic "wedge" because the dressing is made from one of California's best cheeses. And those jumbo shrimp are really well done.

How fun to see captain Rockefeller on a menu and actually executed well. It's a creamy dish for a white Burgundy or one of California's top Chardonnays. Crispy sides are a steakhouse staple: there are plenty with fresh Diagonese comment, stuffed in a deep gold and presented with a fine basil oil.

Boa

Location: 101 Santa Monica Blvd., Santa Monica, (310) 659-6666

Atmosphere: Contemporary steakhouse with floor-to-ceiling windows, inviting bar, best bar food in and around urban vine.

Service: Pleasant and professional

Prices: Appetizers, \$12 to \$17; salads, \$8 to \$12; "steak," \$22 to \$32; "steak," \$37 to \$40 for the lobster; composed entrees, \$22 to \$28; sides, \$6 to \$7; desserts, \$5.

Best dishes: Oysters Rockefeller, but stress only when chilled jumbo prawns, the wedge salad, "all day" dry-aged New York strip, bone-in Kansas City flat ribbons, Indonesian spiced lamb chops, hand-cut, snappy fries, garlic green beans, roasted chicken with herb, blister lemon citrus broiler.

Wine list: Big on beef-friendly but pedestrian reds. Cerebral \$22.

Best tables: One of the generous booths

Special features: Social private



RICH AND CHEWY: New York strip steak, aged 40 days

table for large groups behind the wine storage tower

Details: Open daily for lunch, 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., and, with revised hours, 5 to 8:30 p.m.; dinner, 5:30 to 11:30 p.m. Full bar. Valet parking \$5.

Being in heat, all food, service and ambiance will give you the best possible experience. A steakhouse on any day, we'll make sure it's the best in the city.



SEAFOOD TOO: An \$18 omelette with crab is one of the "steak" options lurking among Boa's "steak" menu selections.