

**RESTAURANT REVIEW:****BLU****on Celebrity Cruises'  
Celebrity Silhouette**

by

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**B**lu can be confusing. Is it a health food restaurant? Is it a fine dining venue? While these concepts are often thought of as mutually exclusive, Blu is in fact both.

The neighborhood in which Blu resides on Deck 5 of Celebrity Silhouette is also home to most of the ship's specialty restaurants. Blu, however, is the dining room for guests staying in Silhouette's Aqua class staterooms. In other words, guests staying in those staterooms have their meals in Blu rather than in the ship's main dining room. Guests staying in other staterooms cannot dine in Blu unless they are invited to do so.

Because Aqua class passengers have certain privileges in the ship's spa, Blu can be viewed as part of an overall healthy-living cruise experience. While this spa connection is viewed as a plus by some cruisers, it is viewed as a negative by others. Unfortunately, "spa cuisine" has developed a reputation as being tasteless, with

small portions of things that you "should eat" because they are "good for you."

However, those dreading a dreary diet of bean sprouts topped off with the occasional dried apricot will be pleasantly surprised by Blu. The breakfast menu includes such things as French toast, pancakes and eggs cooked any style. The dinners are multi-course banquets that include slow roasted prime rib, New York pepper steak, lobster tail and Kobe-style beef stuffed pasta shells to list but a few examples.

There is also no lack of flavor. Each item is cooked ala minute and the freshness as well as the quality of the ingredients comes through. I was particularly impressed by the flavors of the appetizers and soups, not to mention the warm oven-fresh muffins in the morning.

Thus, Blu can be thought of as a spa restaurant in the sense that a spa is a luxury indulgence. It is a treat for the senses in the way that relaxing in a thalassother-



apy pool gives pleasure to the body.

As a result, one might well think that Blu is really a fine dining venue that has a somewhat tenuous connection to the ship's spa. After all, it has all of the hallmark's of a shipboard fine dining venue.

The room itself is a beautiful contemporary design. One wall is a floor-to-ceiling window that gives spectacular views of the sea and which during the day bathes the room in natural light. The other walls are dominated by pristine white-on-white reliefs. Then in the middle of the room, part of the ship's steel structure has been transformed into a modern sculpture with circles of color contrasting with the brushed metal. The total effect is sophisticated, urban and contemporary.

Of course, no restaurant can claim to be a fine dining venue without excellent service. In Blu, there are no assigned tables or dining times. However, the room is intimate enough that the staff comes to know the various guests' preferences over the course of a voyage. Items ordered regularly are remembered and suggestions are made concerning the menu. Items appear promptly and dishes are removed as the guests finish with them. The staff is friendly, polite and not intrusive.

Most of the tables in Blu are tables for two. However, the scale of the room is such that guests can and often do talk to the adjoining tables. Consequently, over the course of a cruise, camaraderie and friendships build.

Therefore, Blu does have the characteristics of a fine dining venue - - excellent food, variety, good service and a handsome setting. Furthermore, because

access to the restaurant is linked to certain cabin categories, one could argue that Blu belongs in the same exclusive luxury category as the Grill restaurants on the Cunard ships and the Epic Club on Norwegian Epic.

But just when one is about to conclude that Blu is simply a luxury indulgence, one learns that its cooking does indeed have bona-fide healthy living credentials. Using inventive recipes that substitute healthier ingredients and healthier methods of production, the food is lower in calories and better for you. You do not rise from the table after a multi-course meal feeling stuffed or bloated. As above, all this is done without sacrificing flavor.

Thus, Blu is both a fine dining venue and a healthy-living restaurant.