



Sage Restaurant

Odawa Casino Resort

Petoskey, Mich.

(877) 442-6464

www.odawacasino.com/sage

Expensive

Feeding finer senses Tucked away from the seduction of Odawa's slots, Sage serves more than a memorable meal. BY PATTY LANOUE STEARNS

If you're a gambler, you might miss Sage, tucked in the back of the massive Odawa Casino Resort. And that would be unfortunate. Pry yourself away from the seduction of the slots, follow the long mosaic pathway, and feed your finer senses.



Sage does not reverberate with the pulsing light and synthesized jungle sounds that electrify the casino. But this upscale, white-linen restaurant does boast a spectacular, 16-foot-tall, wood-

and-glass wine tower that holds some 400 bottles. Your server will fetch one by mounting the spiral staircase and turning a huge lazy Susan.

Softly lit paper pods reminiscent of giant squid flank the center tower. They beg to be touched. Go ahead — everyone does — then sink down into one of the curvy banquettes that ring the room, all beneath a soaring 22-foot ceiling. If you want more “wow” factor, check out the slab of Paleozoic history at the bar — a granite countertop embedded with fossilized shells.

Chef Rob Sargent, who joined Sage from Bay Harbor Yacht Club, has put together a sumptuous, seasonally chang-



ing menu, with a nice mix of apps, salads, seafood, steaks, chops and luscious-sounding desserts. My group wanted to get a feel for his cooking, so we booked reservations for the monthly wine dinner. At \$95 per person, it's a bargain for 10 courses with wine, served in the adjacent private dining room at a long table that seats 32. Think "big night." The service was grand, and the wines, selected and poured by Pram Acharya of Esperance in Charlevoix, were a perfect match.

We started with a delicious assortment of canapés — tiny, roasted new potatoes topped with crème fraîche and caviar, housemade sausage with grainy mustard and marinated peppers, crispy duck rillettes with truffled remoulade—and moved on from there. I swooned over the velvety butternut squash soup with smoked cheddar, cider-glazed chestnuts and crispy sweet croutons; the herbed pappardelle pasta with roasted garlic and shaved black truffles; the Guinness braised beef short rib with sage gremolata; and the pumpkin-spiced chiffon

cake with cream cheese, caramel-swirl ice cream and walnut autumn compote.

Sitting at the long chef's table is a cool way to meet like-minded food fans. Certainly, all 32 of us had opinions about the dinner. And after six other well-prepared courses that included sole Veronique and rabbit ballotine, we were stuffed to the gills.

When Chef Rob came out at the end of the meal, we gave him big claps, loosened the buttons at our waists and waddled away.



Patty LaNoue Stearns is a regular contributor to Michigan BLUE.

When visiting

Stay: At the three-star Odawa Hotel, with 137 rooms, some that offer views of Little Traverse Bay, (877) 442-6464; www.odawacasino.com/hotel.

Play: At the casino, the hotel pool or fitness center; or drive to Petoskey's Gaslight District and wander the historic streets.

Shop: Cutler's for kitchen accessories, (231) 347-0341; Crooked Tree Arts Center Art Tree Gallery, (231) 347-1236, and Northern Michigan Artists Market, (231) 487-0000, for local fine art and crafts; McLean & Eakin Booksellers for local authors' books, (231) 487-0000; and Bondurant for stylish home décor, (231) 439-91981.