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The new Mastro's Steakhouse in The Post Oak Hotel

STEAK WELL DONE

By Laurann Claridge

In recent years, Houston has become a contested battleground of steakhouse vs. steakhouse, all vying for the expense-account crowd that routinely discusses mergers and acquisitions, the price of oil and real estate deals over a New York strip. The newest entrant into the steak game is **Mastro's Steakhouse**. Originally created by the Mastro brothers, the concept was purchased by Houston billionaire and Landry's CEO and chairman **Tilman Fertitta** in 2007, all while the brothers sat on the sidelines until their non-compete clause lapsed. Coincidentally (or not), the siblings entered the market once again with another steak concept, Steak 48, one of which is poised less than a mile from the newly unveiled Mastro's.

Never to be deterred by competition, Fertitta's crown jewel stands as one of the anchors to his new 10-acre development that includes the soon-to-open Post Oak Hotel and Landry's corporate headquarters. While Porsches, Ferraris, Rolls-Royces and Bentleys line the VIP spots up front, inside the dimly lit room big spenders vie for semicircular booths and seats around the see-and-be seen bar set center stage, all as a lounge singer croons top-

40 hits. Your polished server (ours was Mark) guides you through menu standouts including exclusives to Houston such as garlic-roasted bone marrow and the best dish at our table: the Aspen Ridge, an all-natural boneless rib-eye, sliced a quarter-inch thick and served alongside a scorching-hot stone and a trio of sauces. Sear each side of this beautifully marbled cut ever so briefly on the sizzling stone, then top with a dollop of mustard, ponzu

with jalapeño, or chimichuri sauce (\$48). Kudos to exec chef **Michael Colbert** for dreaming up this dish, and chef **Angel Cabajal** of Cabo San Lucas's Nixsan, who is credited with developing Mastro's appealing sushi selections.

Steaks and chops, all 28-day wet aged, range from a manageable six-ounce petite filet (\$41) to a mighty 33-ounce chef's-cut rib-eye chop (\$75), all of which can be served au poivre (but sans the classic pan peppercorn sauce laced with cognac) and served on a 400-degree white platter scattered with chopped fresh parsley. Seafood options also abound, from New Zealand Ora King salmon filet (\$36) and local Gulf snapper and jumbo lump crab served *à la meunière* (\$45) to live Maine lobster and Alaskan king crab, both of which are market priced. Standard sides include the usual, but go for the unusual, the Alaska king crab with a black truffle gnocchi (\$34) or the perfectly prepared scalloped potatoes laced with Gruyère (\$14). Finish with the dessert that regulars often start their meal with: Mastro's signature butter cake, a truly decadent slice topped with vanilla ice cream, or the equally wonderful warm cherry crisp. *Mastro's, 1600 Post Oak Blvd., 713.993.2500, mastrosrestaurants.com.*

Wagyu Tomahawk



Warm butter cake

