

Watermark on Main offers casual elegance

By Margaret Aldrich
Special to The Star

On the corner of Main and Chestnut streets in downtown Ventura, a historic building which was once the site of Ventura County Power Company, the Ventura Guarantee Building and Loan Association

and Bahn's Jewelers has achieved its ultimate incarnation as home of the Watermark on Main Restaurant.

Purchased in 2004 and completely renovated throughout 2007 and 2008 by husband and wife Mark and Kathy Hartley, the Watermark on Main has emerged as an establishment with a dual personality: Fine dining and elegant cuisine in the dining room and a casual fun nightlife destination upstairs in the third-story W20 Lounge. The elegance and beauty of the structure, inside and out, are matched only by the excellence and craftsmanship of the food.

The historic integrity of the building has been maintained and many of Ventura's finest contemporary craftsmen have worked to remain true to the spirit of the original craftsmanship. The independently structured third story which houses W20, the Watermark's rooftop restaurant and bar, was built with more than 61,000 pounds



Alan Bino / Special to The Star

The decor in Watermark's W20 Lounge is extraordinary with a marine theme, including the bar which lights up at night with a luminescent undersea look.

of steel used to support the structure suspended above the original roof.

Contemporary, sophisticated, yet comfortable and not at all stuffy, the Watermark reflects meticulous attention to detail in all aspects of the restaurant, from

the decor, to the food and beverages, to its talented, experienced staff.

Executive Chef Peter Edwards, a native of Australia whose career has encompassed

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WATERMARK

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such fine restaurants as The Ojai Valley Inn, La Bernadin in New York City and Tetsuya's in Sydney, Australia, says. "The Watermark is Ventura's benchmark in terms of quality, contemporary food. We are a fine dining restaurant. A destination restaurant. But, also, we want to be more than that, to be a place where local people feel comfortable coming to."

Edwards is responsible for the incredible variety of food, especially seasonally inspired dishes, available both in the main dining room and upstairs in W20. The establishment also features a full raw bar, with fresh seafood delivered daily. The dinner menu encompasses pastas, seafood and other exceptional entrees such as fig-crusted New Zealand rack of lamb, grilled prime rib-eye steak and a lobster pot pie.

The decor in W20 is extraordinary with a marine theme accentuated by the beautiful cobalt blue tile walls, the bar which lights up at night with a luminescent undersea look and even a blown glass jellyfish dangling from the ceiling. This rooftop getaway has retractable ceilings for stargazing on a summer night and outside patios with

Watermark on Main

598 E. Main St.
Ventura
643-6880
<http://www.watermarkonmain.com>

heaters, one near the front of the building giving an overview of downtown Ventura and the nearby hillsides and one in the rear of the building with a spectacular view of the Pacific Ocean.

A unique Small Plate menu is offered at W20, with a variety of savory offerings such as smoked salmon, maple leaf duck quesadilla and, of course, the always popular prime rib or kobe beef sliders. W20's bar offers a full range of libations, with many tasty varieties of martinis, margaritas and other favorites. All concoctions are made with the finest of ingredients, from the City Hall (Absinthe, Absolut Apeach and Ventura Limoncella) to the Watermark Martini (made with Ketel One vodka and served dirty and spicy with house-made jalapeno-stuffed olives.)

Considering owner Mark Hartley's music industry connections (the roster of artists he manages includes Brad Paisley, Leann Rimes, Olivia Newton John, Robert Cray and

Big Bad Voodoo Daddy), it's no surprise that the Watermark is well-known for its musical entertainment, with live music offered Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights, as well as during the day on Sunday. Tuesday night is Acoustic night and Wednesday features Jazz at the Mark, showcasing not only local talent but musicians from Los Angeles and beyond.

Situated between the main dining room and W20 is the unique Mezzanine floor, with intimate dining areas that overlook the first floor. Also on the Mezzanine is a cozy dining room with its own fireplace, which is perfect for small parties and private functions.

Whether it is fine dining, musical entertainment or casual fun in the W20 lounge you are seeking, Watermark on Main is the destination of choice.

It opens Tuesday through Friday at 5 p.m., noon on Saturdays for lunch and at 10 a.m. on Sunday for brunch. It also offers happy hour from 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and from 3 to 7 p.m. Sunday.

For more information, call 643-6880 or visit its extensive Web site where you can see menus with prices and make reservations at <http://www.watermarkonmain.com>.

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April 2-9, 2010 | timeOut