

3 Unbeatable Waterfront Restaurants With San Francisco Bay Area Views For Any Budget

Chelsea Davis



Views from EPIC Steak dining room.

The only thing that makes delicious cuisine better? Dining on top notch cuisine while overlooking iconic San Francisco Bay Area Views. When it comes to the food scene in the Bay Area, few restaurants boast better views than [Waterbar](#) and [EPIC Steak](#), both of which are located on the Embarcadero, and [Mersea](#), Treasure Island's culinary gem. What ties them together? Parke Ulrich, who holds the title of Executive Chef and Co-Owner at all three establishments.

While each restaurant has its own concept, vibe and price point, two things remain the same across each hot spot. One, incredible, unobstructed waterfront views. And two, the influence of a chef who is committed to elevating the best flavors of the season with a consistent cooking style that pays homage to the growers and producers who make those ingredients shine.



Chef Park Ulrich

“Seasonality is what drives the inspiration, and the creativity comes from the flavors of what the team and I like to eat in that season,” explains Chef Ulrich. “My style as a chef has always been hands-on, as you use all of your senses to cook and learn. Simple elegance and clean, bold flavors that allow the product to tell its own story.”

“It is about honoring and respecting not only the ingredients for what they are, but it also showcases the passion of the farmer, rancher, fisherman etc.... I would like to think the dining experience as a whole tells a story, which adds to my belief that the dining room table is a social gathering place where people come together to share stories and celebrate. It is the personalities in each kitchen which make them different or unique”



Illuminated waterfront views of the Bay Bridge from Waterbar.

At the core of EPIC is steak, with the prime quality and dry aged meat program making it stand out, says the chef. Waterbar is a leader in the worlds of sustainability and traceability when it comes to their seafood, a key reason it's widely considered the best seafood restaurant in San Francisco, continues Chef Ulrich.

As for Mersea, it's a hybrid of the two. Chef Ulrich describes it as "comfort casual" with its "commitment to quality and making everything in house" giving it its standout presence.

"The fish is fresh, sustainable and butchered in house, as well, we grind dry aged meat to create the hamburgers and all sauces are made in house. This is a quality most people don't expect from a casual restaurant but it is something that elevates us and distinguishes us from others."

We chatted with Chef Ulrich on what makes each restaurant special, the uniqueness of Mersea, what you can expect from each dining experience, COVID-19 pivots, cooking inspiration and more. Here's what this talented chef had to say.

Epic Steak, Waterbar and Mersea are all fantastic dining options for those looking for upscale dining with gorgeous views of the water. How each experience is different?

EPIC Steak

As the name suggests, EPIC Steak is a steak house. The cuisine is steeped in classic steakhouse ideals, but we incorporate the multi-cultural influences that San Francisco offers to create elegant offerings, focusing on simple, bold flavors. We try to let the ingredients speak for themselves and create lighter versions of some classics! People have a misconception that all steak houses are stuffy, expensive and "Boys Club." I think EPIC Steak is none of that.



EPIC Steak's Epic Meal For Two.

Our service is engaging and friendly, almost casual, the menu has something for everyone. As we are located on the waterfront, I think that lends to our easy going, friendly atmosphere. The restaurant is open with lots of windows and light which is great to watch the dramatic views of the Bay Bridge and water. Guests come for milestone celebrations, as well as just a quick bite before the Giants baseball game!

Waterbar

Waterbar is the sister restaurant to EPIC Steak which is just next door. While the floor to ceiling aquariums reflect the bounty of San Francisco Bay and the surrounding waters, the terraces and windows showcase the views of the Bay Bridge, Treasure Island and the vibrancy of San Francisco's waterfront... it is a must visit for anyone coming to San Francisco! The cuisine is seafood and sourced using the highest environmentally safe and sustainable practices.



Waterbar's seafood platter.

Simple, light presentations showcase the seafood and shellfish... the oyster bar has one of the largest selections of oysters on the West coast. From our \$1 oysters to lobster and caviar, there is something for everyone at Waterbar, I believe. Although we have white tablecloths, the vibe is casual and friendly; an atmosphere that the water helps create along with the flavors of the food that conjure memories of childhood moments at the beach.

Mersea

Located in the middle of the bay on Treasure Island, Mersea is the only restaurant that has views looking back at the San Francisco skyline, Alcatraz and Angel Islands along with Golden Gate and Bay Bridges. I think being on the island and looking back at the city creates a very laid-back vibe which many refer to as "island time." People tend to lose track of time relaxing and enjoying themselves while looking back at the city. While

Mersea has the same philosophy around quality ingredients, service and hospitality as the other two, it is unique.

We built Mersea from an empty field with the focus to be environmentally friendly; we repurposed and recycled everything. From the shipping containers, old bowling alley lanes converted to tables and used pallets and reclaimed wood for seating, Mersea creates a vibe that is comfortable and in line with the “Comfort Casual” cuisine. The food is fresh, made from scratch and very affordable.

Mersea was designed to be “family friendly” which not only includes children, but also your family pet. Majority of the space is outdoors and much more casual than that of the two sister restaurants. Pre Covid, we even offered games like a 5-hole professional putting green, 2 bocce ball courts and cornhole.



Views of the San Francisco skyline from Mersea on Treasure Island.



A spread of food from Mersea.

As the Co-Owner and Executive Chef at all three restaurants, what can guests rely on experiencing at each dining experience?

I am a common thread with all three restaurants and I think there is an underlying theme of a commitment to excellence as well as a commitment to our staff at each restaurant that I help cultivate with my partners MeeSun Boice (Mersea) and Pete Sittnick (Waterbar and EPIC). The food and menus are my contribution to that passion. Although the menus are different based on their concept, the quality, sustainability, and respect for seasonality are the foundation at each restaurant.

Mersea is the newest of your restaurant endeavors. What makes this Treasure Island gem unique?

As I mentioned above, there are numerous things that make Mersea unique. From using thirteen shipping containers to build the restaurant (three of them repurposed from the US military (MRDK-Military Rapid Deployment Kitchen to create the kitchen), to the spectacular views, to the comfort casual food and to Mersea being the hub of social activity around which a new neighborhood is being developed in a major city.

All of these things lend to an experience of discovery when people come to Mersea. Many people who have lived in San Francisco for years have seen Treasure Island every day, but many have never taken the exit to visit the island.



Outdoor dining at Mersea.

How have you had to pivot the dining experience at each restaurant since COVID and has it been easier given your waterfront locations?

Yes, each restaurant has had to pivot in the wake of the pandemic and COVID. Now, with only outside seating available, it has been challenging because that is not necessarily enough seats to sustain the business as it was. There have been, and still are, a lot of questions as to how to proceed. We have learned a lot.

First, we recommitted to the staff when we reopened, and started to do “take-out” which was new for us. We restructured the menus so they were more conducive for “take-out” like sandwiches and even pizza. We explored different avenues to engage in our communities and strengthen those partnerships. Mersea participated (in partnership with District Supervisor Matt Haney and One Treasure Island and other local businesses) by providing free meals 2x a week for six weeks for all of the island residents.

EPIC and Waterbar have volunteered many hours to non-profit organizations and partnered with The East Cut, a Community Benefit District. We are learning and adjusting as we go, but the core values of providing a great dining experience through good food and hospitality at each restaurant hasn't wavered.

Being along the waterfronts and having outdoor dining spaces has been a blessing for us, but it is not necessarily easier. The team, my partners, Pete Sittnick and MeeSun Boice, their experience, knowledge and fresh outlook on the business has made it easier. I am grateful to be a part of it all.