

## Hangover Observations: Preview Night at Paul Martin's

Tuesday, February 24, 2009, by Paolo

*We've still got a ton of new restaurant openings to report this week, but before we do, we present a special edition of Hangover Observations.*



**Paul Martin's American Bistro** is the newest venture by veteran restaurateurs Brian Bennett and Paul Fleming (aka the "P.F." of P.F. Chang's and the "Fleming" of Fleming's Steakhouse). Hoping to replicate the success of their NorCal original, they are holding nothing back with their new space in El Segundo. **The restaurant opens today.**

At last night's preview, the place was packed with a who's who crowd of local chefs, politicians and other hungry dignitaries, while the wait staff got their chance to iron out the wrinkles as they spent the night delivering platters of oysters on ice, boards stacked with artisan meats, and plate after plate of slow-cooked ribs. Here, then, are some observations from last night, the night that was:

- 1)** Paul Martin's really wants you to know that they use local, peak-of-the-season ingredients. The menu highlights their purveyors in every single dish. Our waiter—a total Matthew Lillard lookalike—casually threw these facts into our conversation: They get their Heineken straight from Holland (different bottle and everything, natch), the Hitching Post syrah is served at 58 degrees precisely, and the Red Pear Martini comes garnished with a sous-vide slice of pear. So yeah, no messing around here.
- 2)** Don't skip the sides. What really blew us away were their simplest dishes. A side dish of Bloomsdale spinach is flash wilted and tossed with Point Reyes blue cheese. Simple, but killer.
- 3)** Allow us a gadget-head moment: at the bar, there is a beer tap dispenser that chills the beer glass as it fills up. Shipped straight from Italy for the, ahem, American bistro.
- 4)** Already basking in an after-dinner glow, we got even more glow-y upon the revelation that parking in the nearby structure is free (for three hours). It's the little things sometimes.
- 5)** Some sensitivity to pricing at Paul Martin's: They pour a generous 7 oz wine by the glass (most places do 4oz). Also, a happy hour worth jotting down: \$4 select apps, cocktails and wines. Mon-Fri, 3-6 2361 Rosecrans Avenue, El Segundo; (310) 643-9300; website

—Yvonne Ip