

[Main](#) | [Beach Donuts in Old Lyme: A Connecticut Cult Favorite](#) »

Provençal Cuisine at l'escale in Greenwich

[Tweet](#) 6

[Like](#) 2

AMY KUNDRAT | JULY 8, 2012 |



Over the years, [l'escale](#) in Greenwich, CT has settled comfortably into its inimitable harbor location, continuing to be a port of call for many discerning diners in the surrounding zip codes and home many notable chefs along the way. Not satisfied to rest on its rankings and get by on its good looks, owner/operator Rick Wahlstedt (Artisan, Le Colonial, Japonais and La Goulue) recently **hand-picked a team of veterans, including its opening Executive Chef Frederic Kieffer, to revive the l'escale esprit de corps.**

The care that went into selecting a talented team, a trio of veterans with venerable ties to fine French dining, has also been carried over to a seafood-centric Provençal menu. **The result is a renewed focus that translates to ocean-centric Gallic refinement for one of Greenwich's best dining destinations.**

Local fish, seasonal vegetables, and classic Provençal flavor profiles and preparations are trademarks of l'escale's second coming. The dinner menu begins with a seafood-dominated list of appetizers including sections devoted to a raw bar and tartares as well as dishes such as ***Roties au Piment d'Espelette***, grilled prawns with lemon and kalamata olives that are worth exploring.



Other intriguing dishes, especially perfect for the height of summer, include a separate list of tartares such as **Tartare de Thon**, a tuna tartare prepared with preserved lemon and rosemary oil and a Tartare de Boeuf, a traditional steak tartar served with potato chips.

If you make it to the entrées, a **Bouillabaisse Traditionelle**, a mouthful of ocean with a Saffron-Lobster broth studded with calamari, prawns, clams and mussels, is the embodiment of the new l'escale and a *voyage instantanée* in a dish. This side of the menu, with a range of pastas, fishes and proteins include a linguini aux fruits de mer, grilled Dover sole, and grilled double lamb chops, are each prepared through the lens of Southern France, with a smattering of fresh herbs and vegetables.

The Le Bar á Huître is the most handsome and functional addition to the new l'escale. A custom-designed raw bar that is located on the 2,500 square foot outdoor terrace overlooking the harbor. The raw bar is piled high Thimble Island oysters, lobsters and other shellfish, which of course vary based on that day's catch.



New is good, but tried and true also remains. Several beloved l'escale dishes, such as the **Paillard de Poulet**, are still on the menu. This defiantly thin piece of chicken is an ideal canvas for arugula, tomato and cucumber with a lemon dressing flourish. The *Plateau de Fruits de Mer*, “a classic French seafood tower that can be found in every restaurant from Paris to Nice” also continues as a menu staple.



Not to be left behind, a new cocktail menu breaths life into the bar (there is an indoor and outdoor bar). Director of Operations David Fletcher, whose talents are best seen in the smooth control of a dining room (he worked for many years as maître d'hotel for Daniel Boulud), has also had a hand in this lusty drink menu. ***Some Like It Hot***, a combination of Stolichnaya hot vodka, pineapple juice, Yellow Chartreuse, honey, lemon juice, bitters and red pepper flakes, has a nice balance of spice and heat. But the Pink Panther, a riff off the traditional greyhound cocktail, is refreshing and not to be missed. **It pairs Hendricks Gin, pink grapefruit juice, ginger syrup and prosecco** (although I could do without sugared rim).



And last in the degustation of this new approach are the desserts. **Thanks to Pastry Chef Wendy Young Laurent, they are a destination in and of themselves.** The guiding force behind La Cremaillare pastry program for ten years, Chef Laurent's talent for ice creams and sorbets is evident in their heavy rotation in the dessert menu. From the frozen, **a flight of sorbets and special ice creams, to the more classical such as profiteroles and soufflés**, the desserts stand strong. A nicely curated list of digestifs, such as cognac, armagnac or port, pair nicely with the dessert list and a Greenwich Harbor sunset.

When I asked Kieffer what excited him most about being back in the kitchen, he didn't waste any time in responding, "I want to put it back on the map." I don't doubt this, with a tireless C.V. burnished during stints at Taillevent, Windows of the World, Gaia (one of my favorite Greenwich spots, long since passed) and Artisan in Southport of which he is also a partner. Kieffer is splitting his time between both Artisan and l'escale.



l'escale (which means port of call in French) lives up to its namesake as **a port of call for francophile gourmands and a beacon of Fairfield County seaworthy elegance.** *l'escale* is located at the Delamar Greenwich Harbor Hotel at 500 Steamboat Road in Greenwich, CT 06830. Reservations at 203.661.4600. *l'escale* is open 7 days a week. lesscalerestaurant.com