

DAY
@
SEA

Delectable in Every Sense

Oceania Allura
satisfies appetites
for travel —
and haute cuisine.

by Judi Cuervo



Jacques, the chef ... and Jacques, the restaurant



“Oceania Cruises is widely recognized as offering the “Finest Cuisine at Sea.””



“Jacques is back!”

I squealed with an enthusiasm that bordered on ecstasy. My travel companion looked baffled, wondering who on Earth this French guy was and how I managed to hide from her what sounded like a pretty intense relationship.

The Jacques I was referring to, however, was *Oceania Allura's* Jacques Restaurant, the French favorite inspired by the iconic Jacques Pépin, Oceania's first culinary director, which was glaringly absent from *Allura's* sister ship *Vista* until, I assume, a whole lot of comment card-outrage changed that.

I boarded the all-veranda 67,901 grt, 1,200-guest *Oceania Allura* and found myself focused exclusively on the culinary experiences ahead. It's not surprising, considering Oceania Cruises is widely recognized as offering the “Finest Cuisine at Sea.” During my *Allura* sailing, I'd enjoy a dizzying number of dining experiences along with classes and demonstrations at the ship's high-tech Culinary Center and Chef's Studio, wine-pairing sessions, cocktail crafting, and Culinary Discovery Tours ashore.

I got hungry just thinking about it.

But as I strolled the ship, I realized that this culinary celebration would be set against a pretty delicious backdrop: *Allura* herself. I absorbed her restful, gold-trimmed neutral color scheme, was dazzled by the cascading illuminated crystal sculpture in the main atrium and imagined myself lazing on one of the pool deck's plush chaise lounges dipping into the saltwater pool or one of the two freshwater whirlpools as *Allura* sailed to her next port.

And the more I saw of *Allura*, the more I realized she was just as irresistible as Jacques' escargots in Burgundy butter sauce or even his black Angus chateaubriand.

REFINED LIVING ... FROM BED TO BATH

A stroll down the carpeted corridor of Deck 9 brought us to Concierge-Level Veranda Stateroom 9141, an elegant and restful 290-square-foot retreat with twin Tranquility Beds, love seat, desk, minibar, safe, ample storage, and a veranda furnished with two chairs and cocktail tables. Undeniably luxurious (particularly as our Concierge-Level digs entitle us to a number of extras, including access to a private lounge with coffees, teas, and snacks 24/7), but it is the stateroom's bathroom that delivers the greatest wow. Space in this bathroom abounds! A three-drawer unit with medicine cabinet is tucked neatly in the corner, leaving floor space between it and the full vanity that is topped with a circular mirror that, at the touch of a button, brightens to make-up mirror intensity. The shower could accommodate a 7-foot-tall basketball player and that basketball player would have his or her choice of rain shower, hand-held, or stationary fixtures.

Accommodations aboard *Allura* range from the standard 290-square-foot staterooms to three massive, 2,400 square-foot Owner's Suites. And in any category, you can count on one staggeringly spacious bathroom!





The shower could accommodate a 7-foot-tall basketball player and that basketball player would have his or her choice of rain shower, hand-held, or stationary fixtures.





Aquamar Kitchen

SAVOR THE DIFFERENCES

While most sisters share similarities, differences do exist. And the same is true with *Allura* and her sister ship, *Vista*.

Veterans of *Vista* will instinctively know where to find *Allura*'s Grand Lounge for production shows ... and the magnificent Grand Dining Room and its riot of chandeliers and dramatic ivory arches, the Aquamar spa and its vast menu of massage and beauty offerings, and, in fact, most of the ship's popular public spaces. But the new ship holds some surprises.

The Creperie joins Deck 14. Positioned among Toscano, Polo Grill, dance spot Horizons, the Artist Loft hands-on workshop, the ship's Culinary Center, LYNC Digital Center and Barista's coffee bar, The Creperie is new to the line and a sweets-lover's dream. An extensive menu of sinful crepes, bubble waffles, Italian gelato and frozen yogurt make the venue a popular afternoon snack spot. While on Deck 14, you'll also notice that aboard *Allura*, the library is now adjacent to Horizons, repositioned away from Barista's in order to provide a more serene ambience.

Other differences are not as easy to discern, like an exciting expansion of the Asian fusion menu at specialty restaurant Red Ginger. I'll admit this one threw me a bit as, on each Oceania sailing, Red Ginger's miso-glazed cod was perhaps the dish I most anticipated. Yes, it's still there, but now joined by a dizzying number of main courses that are just as appealing as my long-time favorite. The new menu, which blends Japanese and Peruvian cuisines, tempts with additions like soft-shell crab tempura bao buns and braised Peruvian short rib. Just when I thought Red Ginger couldn't get any better, aboard *Allura*, it has done just that!

Cruise guests are now required to be 18 years of age or older.

A major difference aboard *Allura* — and all Oceania ships now, in fact — is the absence of children. Cruise guests are now required to be 18 years of age or older.

A CULINARY CELEBRATION ... ON BOARD AND ASHORE

Oceania proudly celebrates its culinary excellence. In fact, for *Allura*, the line didn't look to a pop star, actor, or astronaut to christen the ship, but to a select group of *Food & Wine*'s Best New Chef alumni to act as godparents, plural. And the culinary masters in attendance at that gala christening speaks volumes: Sara Moulton, Cat Cora, Claudine Pépin, and *Vista* godmother Giada De Laurentiis among them.

Allura's 12 superb dining venues satisfy every appetite, from the succulent choices at Polo Grill Steakhouse to Jacques' French-accented classics and the Italian specialties of Toscana Grill. The health-conscious can begin their day virtuously at Aquamar with its scrumptious breakfast energy bowls and smoothies, banana pancakes, and avocado toast. Looking for the best lunch at sea? You'll find it at *Allura*'s Grand Dining Room in the form of The International Sampler, a tasty assortment of five regional dishes from a specific part of the world. Genius!

But perhaps the greatest aspect of Oceania's culinary program is its commitment to education along with the extraordinary dining. The Culinary Center offers guests an opportunity to practice techniques and learn about the unique flavor profiles of regional dishes at their very own cooking station while a schedule of chef-led Culinary Discovery tours continues the educational slant ashore.

Thanks to Oceania Cruises' remarkable culinary program, I returned home from *Allura* not only with memories of some of the most incredible dining I've ever experienced, but with a newly-acquired mastery of cooking skills and techniques ... and, unfortunately but unregrettably, four extra pounds. ●



Tavel Bristol-Joseph



Katie Button



Calvin Eng



Aisha Ibrahim



George Mendes



Lawrence "LT" Smith

“Oceania proudly celebrates its culinary excellence. In fact, for *Allura*, the line didn't look to a pop star, actor, or astronaut to christen the ship, but to a select group of *Food & Wine*'s Best New Chef alumni to act as godparents, plural.”



The Culinary Center