

Friday, February 13, 2009

# One Fish, Two Fish

By [Virginia Rainey](#)

What recession? On Wednesday nights, Lugno Restaurant is packed to the gills. I'm willing to bet most diners go for chef Greg Neville's "wood-oven Wednesday" specials, including \$9 baked pastas, pizza and regional wine flights. And well they should. But we went for the whole fish. Another Wednesday special offered two ways, Neville's whole fish makes generous entree for two at \$27.95.

Oddly, outside of Asian restaurants, a whole fish is a rare offering in these parts—and that's a shame. Cooking the fish whole not only seals in moisture, it also coaxes every nuance of flavor out of the bones, upping the "succulence" factor considerably.

Plump and rosy, head and tail intact, Neville's roasted Thai Snapper (technically a sea bream) starts in a grill pan and finishes off in the 600-degree wood-fired oven that is the heart and soul of Lugno

. Ligurian style, he slicks the fish with olive oil and tarts it up with fresh lemons, rosemary, thyme, garlic and tangy green olives. A few thick sliced potatoes on the side soak up all the good juices.

Livornese style, the fish takes on a lustier personality as white wine mingles with tomatoes, capers, garlic, oregano and dark, intensely rich olives.

Either way, when it arrives at the table, it's a kick to slice the tail off and lift the big spine right out. (And don't forget to dip your fork into the fish cheeks for a bite of that silky flesh.) If you're not into filleting, never fear. Servers are happy to oblige.

Neville plans to keep "Wood Oven Wednesdays" going with seasonal variations. So if you're fishing for a bargain that tastes like a trip to Italy, book it now. Reservations essential.

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