

Bites

MINNEAPOLIS

Sea Change

It's not every gastronome who wants to savor a bowl of grilled swordfish cassoulet while staring at a 25-foot-tall photo of Arthur Miller. Yet there he is, either grinning or wincing (it's tough to tell with Mr. Miller), outside the windows of this restaurant, which opened last July on the ground floor of the Guthrie Theater.

I hope you're enjoying that fish, the great dramatist seems to be saying. So how does it feel to plunder the planet's oceans?

If Mr. Miller is indeed questioning your commitment to sustainable dining, Sea Change has your back. "We require the provenance of the fish from all our purveyors," said Tim McKee, the restaurant's executive chef. That swordfish, for instance, has most likely been harpoon-caught from a healthy Pacific fishery.

Sea Change has its own provenance to sell. Mr. McKee, who runs five other Minnesota restaurants, won a James Beard award last year as best Midwestern chef. And then there is the venerable Guthrie Theater itself, which moved to its current home, designed by the Pritzker Prize-winning architect Jean Nouvel, in 2006.

That's a lot of drama. Mr. McKee, in turn, has decided to play up the theatricality of the open kitchen, which juts like a ship's prow into the huge dining room, with its oceanic design accents. "For people who sit at that raw bar it's as much a show as a place to sit and dine," he said.

On a recent visit, a pair of raw langoustines arrived bathed in hot olive oil, with minced chilies dusted on top. Bay scallops, also raw, were complemented by dots of puréed parsley root — the one briny and supple, the other sweetish and smooth.

For more cautious eaters there is a menu column labeled "not fish." Here's where you'll find a perfect

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pork belly set atop a scallion pancake. Texture is the star of this production, as the crispy exterior of the pork oval yields to a fatty center of pure pig. It's hard to say who could handle an entree-size serving of linguine with rock shrimp in a garlicky sea urchin sauce without feeling like Falstaff — that is, a little too swollen with satisfaction. But then the restaurant's careful sourcing and immaculate preparations don't come cheap: An average meal for two, without drinks, tax or tip, is about \$100.

Best to think of that bill as a kind of papal indulgence. How else can you get the pleasures of seafood these days without the guilt?

Sea Change, 818 South Second Street, Minneapolis; (612) 225-6499; seachangempls.com. Lunch: Tuesday to Sunday, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Dinner: Monday to Thursday, 5 to 10 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 5 to 11 p.m.; Sunday, 4:30 to 9 p.m.

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