

## Foothill Ranch is Getting More Urban



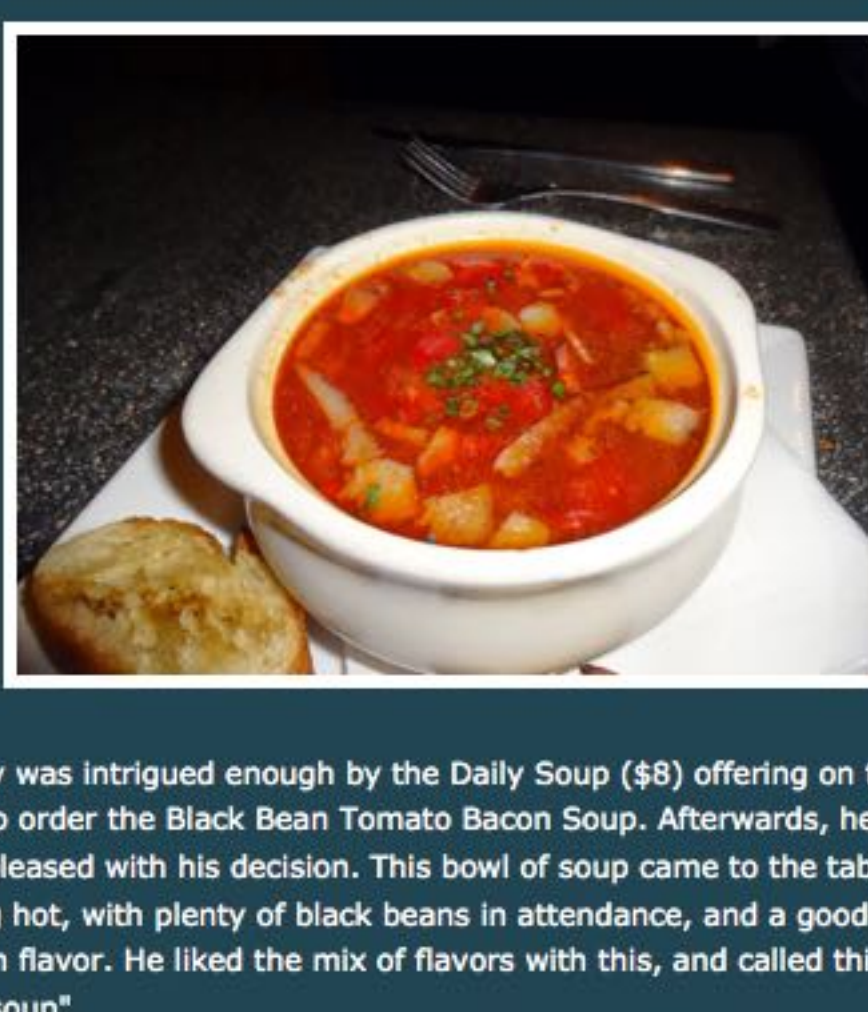
Urban Grill and wine Bar  
27412 Portola Parkway  
Foothill Ranch, CA 92610

When people usually think of Foothill Ranch, they probably think of the 241 Toll Road, Saddleback Church, or maybe some of the companies that do business here, such as Oakley, Wet Seal, or Emergen-C. When people think of restaurants in Foothill Ranch, they almost always think of fast food and chain restaurants, but there are some other options in this inland OC area. You just have to look a little harder to find them.

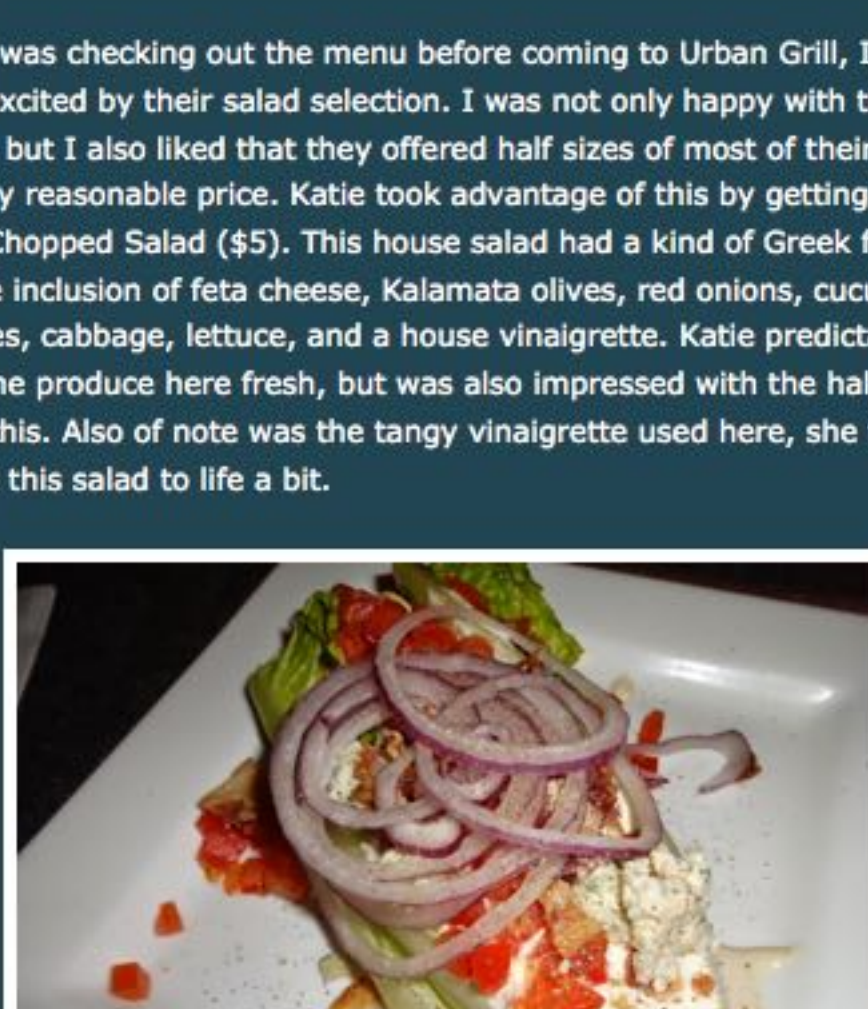
One place you have to look for is Urban Grill and Wine Bar, which is located right in between a Wahoo's and a Starbucks. I had heard of this place from a fellow food blogger, Nathan of *Papa Kaster Eatin'* about a year ago. He had visited during lunch, and remarked how much he had loved his burger. That was enough for me to put this place on our list of restaurants to eat at. Sabrina and Anthony were coming our way for dinner, so we decided to meet at Urban Grill on a recent Saturday night.

Urban Grill has been in business for two years now. Opened by David Hall and Jamie Benson, they felt this area needed a quality restaurant and wine bar. They had both worked at one of my favorite spots, Bungalow in Corona Del Mar. They envisioned Urban Grill as an upscale eatery, specializing in classic comfort food. I was pretty excited to see if they could deliver during our visit.

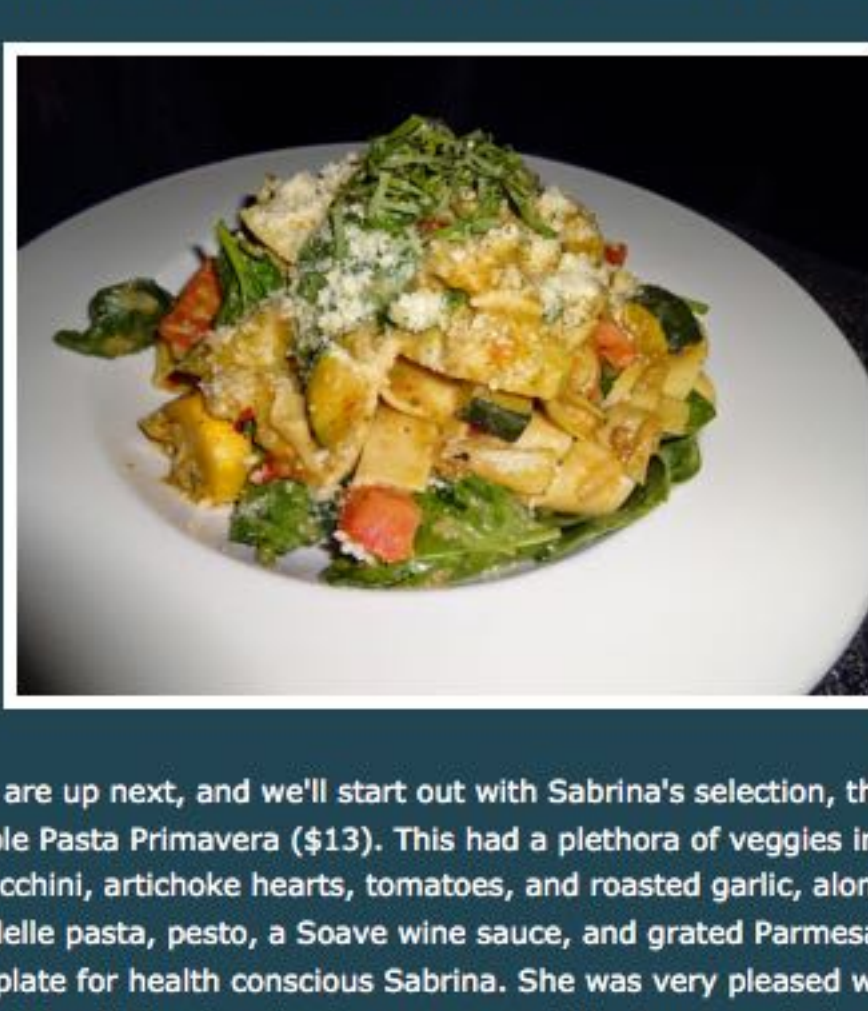
Usually when I think of wine bars, I think stuffy and pretentious. That was not the case here. Urban Grill was rocking at 7PM on a recent Saturday. The restaurant was packed, but we got a seat in the loud, but comfortable dining room almost immediately. This restaurant is dark, with a comfortable spacing between tables, so you are not totally on top of each other. Predictably, the menu here is pretty wine focused. The entire left hand side of the menu is reserved for all of their wines and limited craft beer selections. The food portion of the menu is broken up into small plates, salads, sandwiches, entrees, and sides. Pretty straight forward, which is a nice change of pace. We were all tired of listening to Sabrina's boring stories, so we were pretty happy when the food started to make its way out for us. Let's see what we thought.



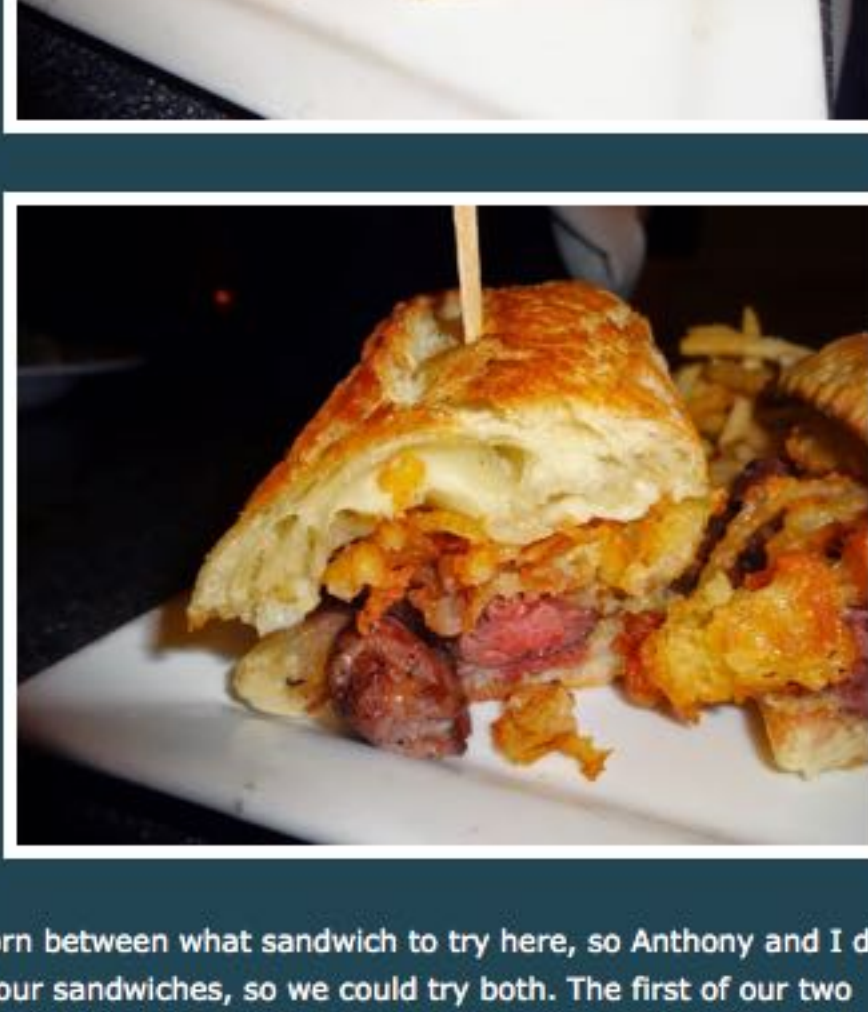
Not the most beautiful of presentations, but this Daily Flatbread (\$12) was a huge hit at our table. On the night we were at Urban, this offering included tri-tip, plenty of red onion, and a spicy red sauce. The spice was definitely present here, while the tri-tip was very tender. I thought the flatbread itself did a fair job of holding everything together, but it was wobbly in the middle parts. Even with this generous serving size, the four of us had no problem polishing this off quickly.



Anthony was intrigued enough by the Daily Soup (\$8) offering on this night, to order the Black Bean Tomato Bacon Soup. Afterwards, he was pretty pleased with his decision. This bowl of soup came to the table scalding hot, with plenty of black beans in attendance, and a good amount of bacon flavor. He liked the mix of flavors with this, and called this, "a hearty soup".



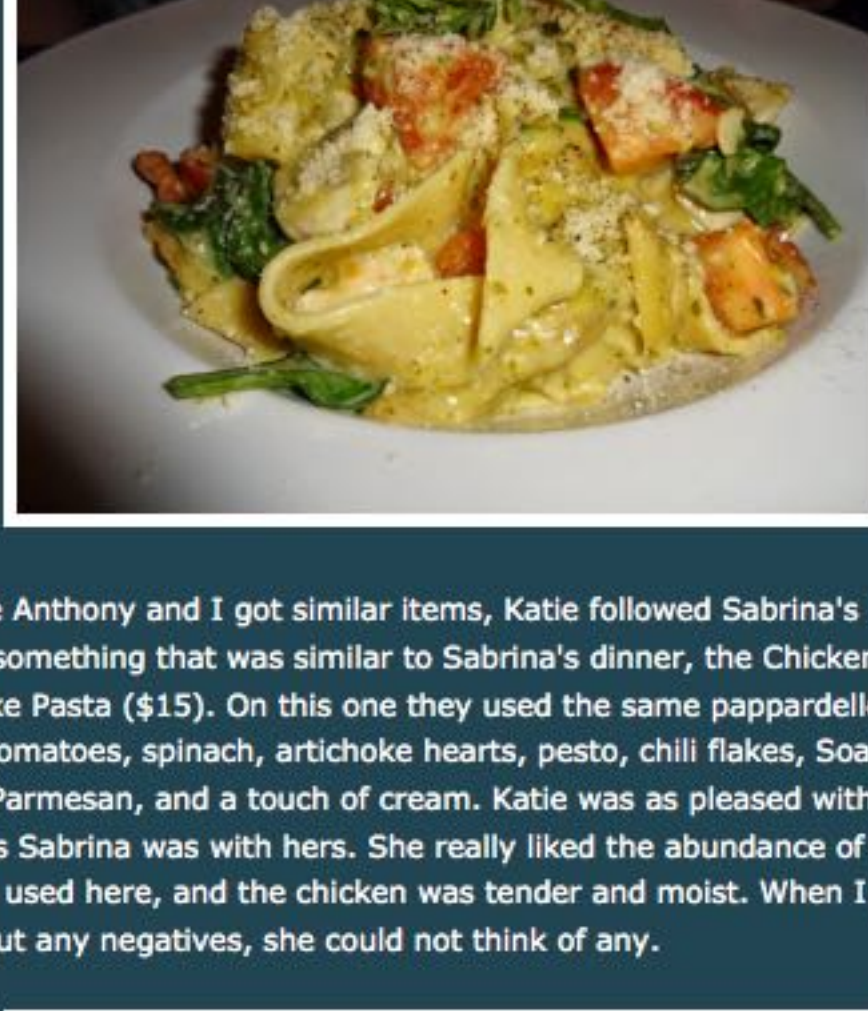
When I was checking out the menu before coming to Urban Grill, I was pretty excited by their salad selection. I was not only happy with their variety, but I also liked that they offered half sizes of most of their salads at a very reasonable price. Katie took advantage of this by getting the Half House Chopped Salad (\$5). This house salad had a kind of Greek feel to it with the inclusion of feta cheese, Kalamata olives, red onions, cucumber, tomatoes, cabbage, lettuce, and a house vinaigrette. Katie predictably called the produce here fresh, but was also impressed with the half portion size of this. Also of note was the tangy vinaigrette used here, she felt it brought this salad to life a bit.



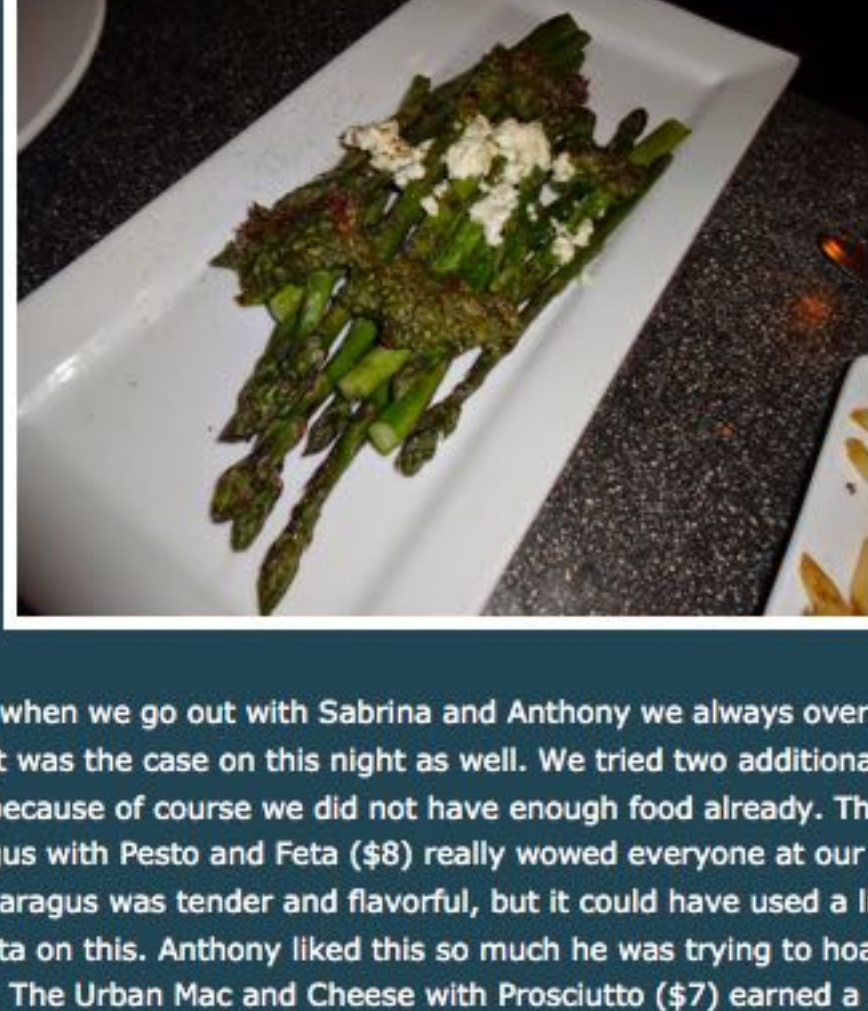
There was no Caesar offered at Urban Grill, so I went with my usual second choice when it comes to salads, a wedge. The Urban Wedge (\$6) came with all of the usual suspects in a typical wedge salad. It starts with hearts of romaine, plenty of red onion, tomatoes, chopped bacon, blue cheese, and a blue cheese dressing. The only thing that Urban Grill added to this salad to make it their own is candied walnuts, which added a nice sweetness and texture component. I liked their version of a wedge. It had a nice balance to it, and there was plenty of blue cheese included here.



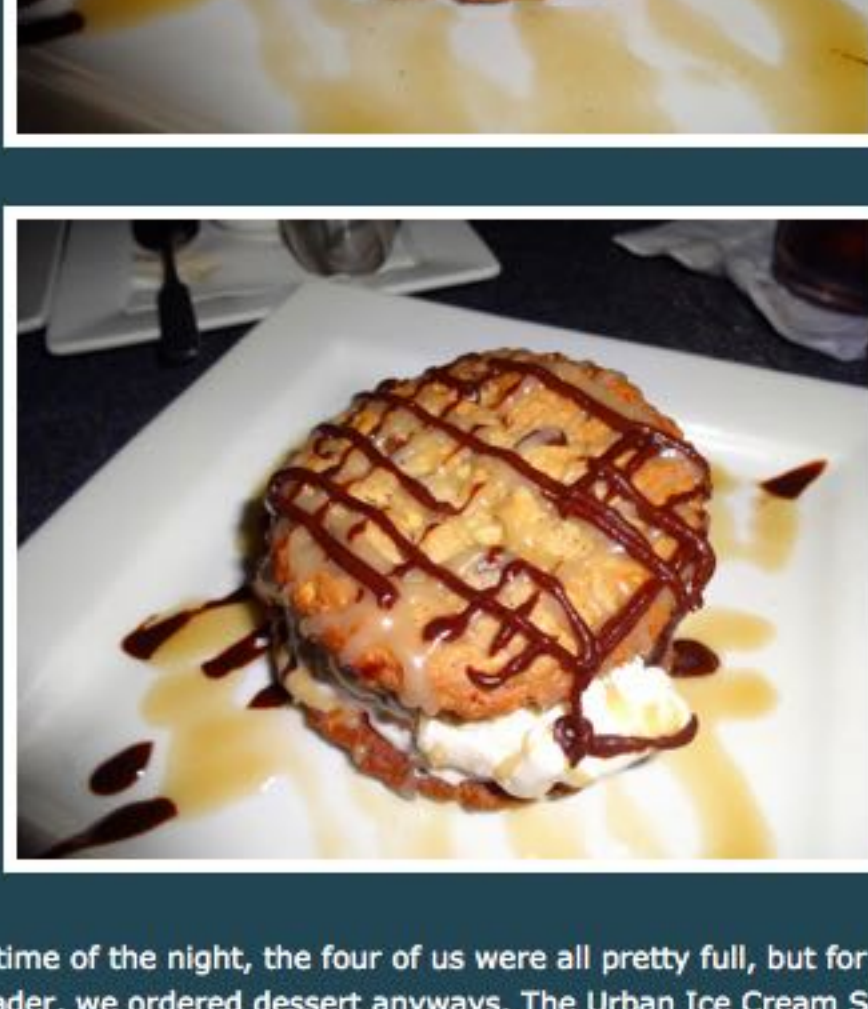
Entrees are up next, and we'll start out with Sabrina's selection, the Grilled Vegetable Pasta Primavera (\$13). This had a plethora of veggies included in it. Zucchini, artichoke hearts, tomatoes, and roasted garlic, along with pappardelle pasta, pesto, a Soave wine sauce, and grated Parmesan made up this plate for health conscious Sabrina. She was very pleased with this big pile of food. She thought the pasta tasted like it was made here, the sauce was excellent, and the artichoke hearts really made this dish pop. She left here happy because it took her only one visit to Urban Grill to find her favorite thing on the menu.



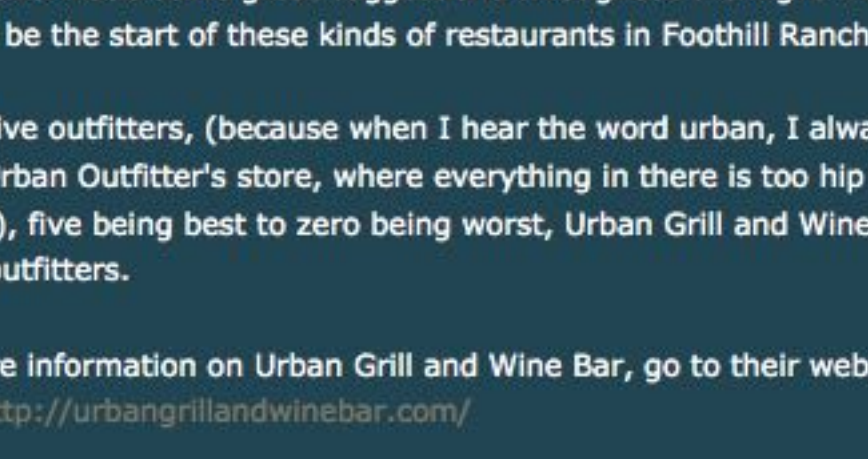
I was torn between what sandwich to try here, so Anthony and I decided to split our sandwiches, so we could try both. The first of our two sandwiches was this Prime Steak Sandwich (\$17). This sandwich is made with prime ribeye, provolone, onion strings, and a mushroom skillet sauce, all on a French baguette. This steak was cooked to a wonderful medium rare, with a great meaty flavor, and hints of garlic from somewhere. The cheese added some moisture, but the mushroom sauce was like Wonder Woman's plane, invisible. Extra sauce, or maybe even an au jus, would have gone a long way in making this sandwich even better than it already was. This came with Herbed Matchstick Fries, which were seasoned nicely and had a good crunch to them.



The second of our two sandwiches was this Grilled Tri-Tip Sandwich (\$11.50). Joining the tri-tip on the caramelized onion bun was provolone, horseradish cream, and caramelized onions. After having the flatbread with the tri-tip on it, I knew that the meat was going to be good, and it was. It was tender, but just like the other sandwich, this needed more of a sauce. If the menu had not clued me into the horseradish sauce being included here, I would have had no idea that it was on here. We should have gotten some extra on the side. The bun on this one was very sturdy, but soft. A good combo to have in the bread game.



Just like Anthony and I got similar items, Katie followed Sabrina's lead by having something that was similar to Sabrina's dinner, the Chicken Artichoke Pasta (\$15). On this one they used the same pappardelle pasta, garlic, tomatoes, spinach, artichoke hearts, pesto, chili flakes, Soave wine sauce, Parmesan, and a touch of cream. Katie was as pleased with her meal, as Sabrina was with hers. She really liked the abundance of fresh veggies used here, and the chicken was tender and moist. When I pressed her about any negatives, she could not think of any.



Usually when we go out with Sabrina and Anthony we always overindulge, and that was the case on this night as well. We tried two additional side items, because of course we did not have enough food already. The Grilled Asparagus with Pesto and Feta (\$8) really wowed everyone at our table. The asparagus was tender and flavorful, but it could have used a little more feta on this. Anthony liked this so much he was trying to hoard it for himself. The Urban Mac and Cheese with Prosciutto (\$7) earned a split decision at our table. The girls loved this side item, but both Anthony and I kind of thought it was a little too bland, and resembled the Kraft version too closely. The prosciutto helped a little but here, but not enough for me to order this again.



By this time of the night, the four of us were all pretty full, but for you dear reader, we ordered dessert anyways. The Urban Ice Cream Sandwich (\$7) gets most of the dessert love from the reviews on Yelp, so that's the one we tried. Two oatmeal based cookies are sandwiched between vanilla ice cream, and then drizzled with chocolate and caramel sauce. This dessert was good, but the cookie was a little too hard for us to get our forks through it. It really took a lot of effort, and the ice cream squirted out the sides. I liked the cookie, but I probably would have liked to have had them without all the trouble of trying to break through them with a fork.

Urban Grill and Wine Bar is a welcome addition to the Foothill Ranch neighborhood. Although it was not a perfect meal all around, the food that we did have is a welcome diversion from their restaurant food that is king around these parts. I look forward to trying their pork chop or maybe one of their steaks on our next trip here. I felt the prices were more than fair for the amount of food that you get. Our server Bill was right on top of things, and made some great suggestions throughout the night. Hopefully this will be the start of these kinds of restaurants in Foothill Ranch.

Out of five outfitters, (because when I hear the word urban, I always think of the Urban Outfitter's store, where everything in there is too hip for me to wear), five being best to zero being worst, Urban Grill and Wine Bar gets 3 outfitters.

For more information on Urban Grill and Wine Bar, go to their website here: <http://urbangrillandwinebar.com/>