

OC Review: Urban Grill & Wine Bar, Foothill Ranch



THE BURGER AT URBAN GRILL & WINE BAR (PHOTO BY CINDY YAMANAKA, OC REGISTER)

The burger is why I'm here. Someone mentioned that I ought to try the burger at Urban Grill & Wine Bar in Foothill Ranch, so when I found myself hungry in this corner of the county in the middle of the afternoon, at an hour that qualifies as neither lunch nor dinner, I was happy to find this place.

The burger is as classic as they come, a nice fatty blend of sirloin and brisket, cooked perfectly medium-rare, as ordered, and sandwiched between a pillowy bun with lettuce, a slice of tomato and a tight knot of crispy, frizzly onion rings. It requires both hands to squeeze the whole thing down to a size that will almost fit between my teeth. I bite it from several angles, slowly working my way into its juicy middle. The potatoes that come with it are pretty good, too, a tall, haystack of skinny fries...

This part of the county doesn't have a lot of great dining options. The nicest restaurants in this neck of the woods are probably the nearby Outback, Souplantation and Chili's. Friends who live in the neighborhood swear by it. And given the crowds even on a Tuesday night, it's obvious that the neighborhood is thankful for a chef-driven alternative to the chains.

Urban Grill isn't fancy. It's in a strip mall alongside a Starbucks and a Wahoo's, and it dresses the part, with tall bar-like tables in the front room next to the open kitchen, and candlelit tables without tablecloths in the main dining area. The restaurant showcases the work of local artists, and by the looks of the art that's on display, this part of the county is short on artists, too. But the awkward paintings give the place a cozy, friendly, neighborhood coffeehouse vibe...