

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Hugo's

BY SAVANNAH NELSON

When opportunity knocked, Hugo's answered. While the rest of the world closed its doors and shuttered its windows, one Glenwood Springs restaurant took its chances and opened its one-of-a-kind eatery in the middle of a global pandemic.

They've thrived, rightfully so.

Hugo's is a modern-day fairy tale packaged as a non-pretentious fine dining experience. It has all the ingredients for a heartwarming success story: a highly skilled chef (Hugo Muñoz, formerly of Aspen's Hotel Jerome), business owners with a dream (Sandra Sovich and Hugo Muñoz are a mother-and son-in-law team), a community that has opened their arms and bellies, a beautiful space designed to impress and most importantly, a knock-out menu with delicious, innovative food.

"Hugo is totally self-taught and his experience working in Aspen with up-scale dining has allowed us to bring something new to Glenwood Springs," co-owner Sandra Sovich said. "Hugo's dream has always been to own a restaurant and the opportunity came, in the middle of a pandemic. It was now or never and everything came together piece by piece. The community has supported us from the beginning and we love to hear our customers say, 'are we in Aspen or Glenwood?' at the end of their meal."

While Hugo's story is good, their food is somehow even better. They serve up gourmet American cuisine with dishes spanning influences from around the world—from Mexico to Argentina to Nicaragua and beyond, for lunch, dinner and brunch on the weekends.

Starting with drinks and appetizers, there's no wrong way to go about a dinner order. Hugo's rosemary mule is made to impress, with flavorful lavender notes that pair beautifully with the crispy buffalo cauliflower and tabasco aioli. Their barrel-aged cocktail has leather, vanilla, and citrusy notes, which are a beautiful compliment to the honey-glazed chicken "lollipops"—a clever, juicy and tangy, customer-favorite dish. A glass of Pinot Noir will complement every plate through dessert, with lasting notes.

Customers will likely realize that even though each menu item captures the spirit of high-end resort town dining, Hugo's maintains a laid-back down-valley atmosphere. Like many restaurants in Glenwood, you'll find some dining guests wearing Chaco's and tan-lines and others with ties and dress shoes – and there's no wrong answer.

For example, when you're eating one of the best salads in the valley—a refreshing beet salad made with a colorful and carefully plated array of arugula, cantaloupe, beets, and crumbles of goat cheese—you'll likely be listening to a soft pop ballad in the background. Before you know it, you'll devour your entire salad to Michael Jackson's "Beat It" (which pairs well with a glass of white wine) and wonder how a vinaigrette could capture the taste of summer so well.

There's something for everyone on Hugo's menu. For sandwich and burger lovers, there are several mouth-watering choices, from a classic burger made with Colorado beef to a satisfying caprese sandwich served on a thick ciabatta roll. The shoestring fries are an easy choice of side.

The entrée options are arguably the knock-out stars of the menu, with a range of prices that won't break the bank. The blackened fish tacos are made from a perfectly paired cod and pickled cabbage mix, with a cilantro aioli that ties the dish together. If you like Glenwood's famed Slope and Hatch tacos, you'll enjoy these densely-packed, double-tortillad options as well.

When taking the first bite of the pan-seared halibut—served with a delightful butternut squash puree and crispy, melt-in-your-mouth potato gratin—it's hard to believe that Chef Hugo once didn't know how to cook a simple bowl of rice.

"It's true," Sovich laughed. "Hugo used to spend his days working in the field growing up. The first thing he ever tried to make was rice. He put the uncooked rice in the oven, without water or anything, and burnt it to a crisp. He's come a long way from there."

Now, it's clear that Hugo has perfected his culinary craft from start to finish—especially when you end your night with a molten lava cake dripping in a tart and smooth raspberry syrup. It's a sweet treat to help you forget how full you actually are and a reminder to come back soon for more. And you will—the food is artfully created and thoughtfully served, the atmosphere is authentic and the restaurant as a whole is a natural and refreshing complement to Glenwood Springs' dining scene.

Hugo's is open Wednesday through Monday, 4 – 9 p.m. on the weekdays, 11 a.m. – 10 p.m. on Saturdays, and 11 a.m. – 9 p.m. on Sundays. Their menu is available online on their website, at www.hugos-restaurant.com.

