

SPECIALTY RESTAURANT REVIEW:

OCEAN LINERS RESTAURANT

on Celebrity Constellation

by

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Dialogue can greatly enhance a fine dining experience. By this I mean the exchange of information between the server and the guest about the restaurant and about the guest's preferences. With this information, the server can act as a guide catering the evening's experience to the guest's taste. At the Ocean Liners Restaurant on Celebrity Constellation, the very professional staff is quite adept in handling this role.

Ocean Liners is a well-established dining venue. Each of the four Millennium class ships in the Celebrity fleet have for many years operated a fine dining specialty restaurant dedicated to the great ships from the ocean liner period. On Constellation, the restaurant has lacquered paneling from the Ile de France but the decoration also includes painting and artifacts from other great liners as well. Although her last re-fit added two more specialty restaurants, Ocean Liners remains the top-of-the-line dining venue on Constellation.

Celebrity describes Ocean Liners as offering "French cuisine with a Mediterranean Influence." The menu was designed by Jacques Van Staden, the line's

Vice President of Food and Beverage Operations. Van Staden was a celebrity chef in his own right before coming to Celebrity, including being the chef at top rank restaurants in Washington, London and Las Vegas. Since coming to Celebrity, his work has continued to be innovative and imaginative and having been on most of the Celebrity ships, I have come to regard his name on a menu as very a good sign.

Of course, Chef Van Staden is not onboard each sailing of the Constellation cooking each meal in Ocean Liners. Thus, the success of the restaurant depends upon how well the staff is able to execute his recipes and concepts. This is where input from the server comes in particularly handy. Working in the restaurant each night, he or she is in a unique position to know the capabilities of the kitchen and what dishes have been the most successful with the guests.

Focusing on the entrees, my server recommended the pan seared millet mignon in a green pepper and cognac cream sauce. This dish is prepared flambé tableside. While this is a spectacular show, it is actual-

ly an important step in the cooking process. Searing it in flaming cognac opens up the meat and softens it by allowing the sauce to seep into it.

Once the flambé is completed, the meat is transferred to a dish where it joins laratte pomes puree, honshimiji mushrooms and haricots vert. Then it is brought to the table under a silver dome and presented with a flourish.

The filet was exceptional, soft and brimming with flavor. The peppercorns came through in gentle bursts accentuating the tender beef. An excellent recommendation.

To really get the most out of a good server, the dialogue should be a two way exchange.

Unless the server knows something about your likes and dislikes, he or she is likely to recommend dishes that are the most universally popular. This may cause you to miss out on something that would be appealing to your particular taste.

For example, in my conversations with the staff at Ocean Liners, I mentioned that I had enjoyed the venison at the Normandie Restaurant on Celebrity Summit. Venison is a difficult entrée to prepare well and because of that many people shy away from it. Knowing that I appreciated venison, my server recommended that I try Ocean Liner's venison entrée saying it was the "best dish on the menu."

Ocean Liners uses New Zealand farm-raised venison, which helps to avoid the gamey taste and toughness that can mar this dish. The meat is tender, having a slightly smoky taste.

To be successful, however, venison requires a good sauce and contrasting accompaniments. At Ocean Liners, the lingonberry sauce and red cabbage present a fruity contrast to the venison. Meanwhile, the bed of celery root fondant has a more subtle flavor that allows the complexities of the meat to emerge.

My server's recommendations were similarly successful with regard to the selection of premium champagnes that were offered at the start of the meal and with regard to the assortment of European chesses



Above: Ocean Liners seeks to recall the elegance of the great ocean liners.

Below: Ocean Liners' Pan Seared Filet Mignon.



following the main course. The Grand Marnier soufflé recommended for dessert had a gossamer lightness, the fragrant pleasing aroma of the just-baked and a delightful taste.

Ocean Liners is a gracious dining experience in an attractive setting. The advice of its professional staff, reflecting pride in their work and a genuine desire to produce a first class experience, serve to enhance this most enjoyable experience.