

Adventures in Connecticut Dining

David Burke Prime - Not A Gamble To Get A Great Meal *by Stacey Place*

I remember the first time I went to Foxwoods. It was 1995, and I was just out of college with tickets to a Manhattan Transfer Concert (yeah, I wasn't cool then either). Walking through the casino back then, I was amazed by the rows of slot machines and the amount of square footage devoted to not only gambling, but entertainment and dining as well. Walking into Foxwoods this past weekend, some 16 years later, Foxwoods has grown bigger and grander. As a dining destination, Foxwoods has its bases covered. There is something for everyone ... like a Hard Rock Café, a California Pizza Kitchen, the standard buffet and even Fa Da Bakery, which is a specialty Asian Bakery. There are now three steak houses to choose from: Cedars Steak House, which is a Foxwoods original; Tom Colicchio's Craft; and David Burke Prime. Rather than gamble our money away, Bridget and I drove out to Foxwoods this past weekend to try David Burke Prime. Dining here, I figured the odds were in our favor.



Wine Tower in David Burke Prime

David Burke Prime is an oasis amid the smoke infested, loud and noisy casino atmosphere. In the restaurant, it's easily forgotten you're inside one of the busiest casinos in the country. The restaurant has a very modern feel to it with a bustling open kitchen. On the Saturday night I was there, every table was full with patrons ordering multiple courses. What recession? We had a reservation and were seated immediately. Along with the wine list, cocktail menu and dinner menu, we were also given two popovers hot and fresh from the oven. Although we would have preferred the popovers after placing our

order, they were still delicious by the time we ate them, even though they had cooled considerably.

As we looked over the wine list, Master Sommelier Gene Campbell stopped by our table and asked if we would be interested in doing a wine tasting rather than ordering a bottle. Gene had recently relocated from San Diego as was a recent hire by the restaurant. He possessed a great deal of enthusiasm for what he plans to accomplish at David Burke Prime. It is his goal to make the restaurant a "wine destination" with special nights dedicated to wine dinners and tastings. Gene was friendly and personable, not the usual pretentious Sommelier image you may have. He was bursting with knowledge and interesting stories about the wines we were drinking. Throughout our two hour meal, we sampled eight different wines (including an especially tasty grappa).

For our appetizer course, we ordered the Pretzel-Crusted Crab Cake. The crab cake was very good and filled with sweet crab and not much else. It was topped with crunchy, thin pretzel sticks and served with honey/poppy seed and mango sauces. The sweet sauces were a nice contrast to the salty, savory crab cake. The chef also sent out an order of Tuna Tartar, which was the night's special appetizer. One of the partners of the restaurant caught a 320 pound tuna off the coast of Cape Cod on Friday, and we were eating it 24 hours later. The tuna was deftly seasoned with just a few herbs, salt and pepper, and it was served alongside several delicious and crisp, buttery toasts.



Pretzel-Crusted Crab Cake



Tuna Tartar

As the name David Burke Prime implies, the restaurant's specialty is beef. We were taken on a tour of the restaurant's dry aging room by Executive Chef James Klewin. It was a steak lovers dream! There were rows and rows of meats in various stages of the aging process which had all been cut by their in-house butcher. Chef Klewin said at any given time, the value of the beef in the room was between \$30,000 and \$50,000. It was amazing to see. The walls of the dry aging room are lined with pink Himalayan salt which helps control the humidity of the room. Through the dry aging process, the beef shrinks and condenses providing a deeper more concentrated beef flavor. All of the meat is sourced from Creekstone Farms in Kentucky, ensuring its top quality. I chose the 14 oz. Signature Prime Dry Aged Sirloin topped with blue cheese. The steak was absolutely phenomenal and cooked to a beautiful bloody, pink medium rare. In my quest for a perfect steak, this came pretty close. Bridget ordered the Prime 10 oz. Filet Mignon, and though it wasn't dry aged, she loved its flavor and said it was perfectly cooked.



The Dry Aging Room

Like most steakhouses, the side dishes are ordered separately. We tried the Potato Gratin and a seasonal vegetable, Tempura Green Beans. The Potato Gratin was a tasty "layer cake" of potatoes intermingled with cheese and white sauce. The Tempura Green Beans were absolutely addicting. They were prepared in a light and flaky tempura batter and served with a spicy chipotle dipping sauce.



Tempura Green Beans

Between everything we ate and all of the delectable wine Gene provided, we were pretty stuffed at the end of our meal. That being said, however, we had to try one of the delicious sounding desserts! We went with the Warm Ricotta Donuts. The golden, fried orbs of warm dough melted in our mouths. Three flavor injectors were also provided to squeeze different flavors into the donuts, and our favorite was the Chocolate Kahlua Sauce. Chocolate Raspberry and Cherry Vanilla were the other two choices. The next time I visit, which I hope will be soon, I am definitely ordering the signature dessert. David Burke's Cheesecake Lollipop Tree with Bubble Gum Whipped Cream! If only I had saved a little room on this visit. And just when you think you couldn't eat another bite, every meal comes to an end with a David Burke signature cone of bubble gum cotton candy. Fresh spun cotton candy is one of my favorite treats, so for me it was the perfect end to a perfect meal.



Cotton Candy, the perfect end to our meal

At the end of our meal, Bridget and I both commented how this was the best meal we've eaten in a long time. The combination of atmosphere, outstanding service and excellent food made dining at David Burke Prime the perfect night out. From our waitress, to the outstanding management team, to our great wine experience with Gene, to our conversations with Chef Klewin, every detail of the night was well planned, managed and executed. Next time you visit Foxwoods, instead of feeding your money into the new "Sex And The City" slot machine, take your money to David Burke Prime, you'll be glad you did.