

AS SEEN IN
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By Charles Marcanetti
N.Y. Prime Steakhouse

I've been a customer of N.Y. Prime Steakhouse (2350 NW Executive Center Dr., Boca Raton [561] 998-3881) for more than 10 years. I've eaten there countless times and no one, I dare say, is more familiar with their menu than I am. I've been there during the quiet time (before 7 p.m.), through the "insane" time (the rest of their open hours) and I've been there during the off season and the high season (no difference). In 2004 Zagats voted N.Y. Prime the Top Steakhouse in Palm Beach County. Pretty much every other newspaper and magazine rates them as one of, if not the Top Steakhouse (however they word it: 4-Star, Number 1, etc.).

I'm going to add my voice to the throngs of impressed food critics and 1,000's of satisfied customers. But, with your kind permission, I'll only mention the superb food, wine and cocktails casually, since it seems everybody knows already that there is no better in Boca, Palm Beach County, South Florida, perhaps all the way up to Atlanta, Ga. Once you get to Atlanta, Ga., don't worry because there's yet another N.Y. Prime with the same menu, service and, so it seems, reputation.

By now you all know I was raised in the restaurant business and I own or have owned many restaurants over the years. So, when I look at restaurants I am not only sampling the food and qualifying their wines and cocktails and the quality of service, I am looking for management style, rhythm, morale and coordination. I also look for the secret stuff, like the distance from floor to the bottom of the cooking equipment (the more room, the easier and more effective the cleaning and sanitizing), I look at the layout of the bar and the display of the liquor (whiskies used for simple mixed drinks lower and more easily accessible to the bartender and better liquor as you travel up the level of the display shelves, and [this is more rare] the most frequently used of all common and top shelf liquor at the center of the action of the bar, wherever that is). I listen to the crowd as they order their food and drinks to see if communication is easy. And I listen to the servers to see if they are all superbly trained and knowledgeable.

If a restaurant has great food but lousy service the food is for naught. If the service is great but the food is mediocre the evening is lost. If the food and service are wonderful but the ambiance (lighting, décor, etc.) are shabby the evening will be disappointing (even though the customer might not be able to put his or her finger on the problem...it's too subtle in the hub-bub of a hectic evening).

Even before you enter the restaurant, if the parking lot is poorly lit or poorly laid-out you'll be uncomfortable. If the parking attendants are poorly clothed or impolite or inconsiderate the pressure is piled on the restaurant to exceed expectations in order to overcome the initial deficit just to have an O.K. evening. I suppose what I am saying is that the success of the restaurant is in the details.

Well, I've clearly explained some of the things I look for and so, you might ask, "How does N.Y. Prime Steakhouse stack up?" They rate 10 out of 10 in each category. Only a few other steakhouses anywhere are as conscious of the small things that make or break the evening. I mention this because people who learned their trade in school, no matter how prestigious the school, simply cannot know all of these things because these "things" are gained with experience and come only with a genuine love for presenting a perfect package.

The greeters are impeccably dressed and modelesque. The servers well-mannered, well-trained and well-suited to keep up the frenzied pace and still make each guest feel as if there were no one else in the restaurant. On the "review" evening Rodrigo was our server. His Portuguese accent added charm to his flawless knowledge of the menu, the ingredients, the preparation and even the names of the people who teamed-up to make the entire

service a feast for the eyes and spirit as well as, and undeniably, a feast for the palate.

The Operating Partner of N.Y. Prime Steakhouse, Nick Wood, is proud of the quality that he has of explaining in great detail the products and methods of preparation printed on each and every menu. There is one error; however. He says that they are quite expensive. True, the prices are in the upper echelon of food-fare, but this restaurant is actually no more expensive than the competition in the area. The food quality and the service however are incomparable. Add to all this that Mr. Wood is a gracious and warm host whose restaurant reflects his own demeanor.

Even in these trying times the restaurant was packed. I bet that the "regulars" are a little less regular this year than last, but even for a special evening: an anniversary or birthday, as an example, the eatery will draw you back as often as your own circumstances allow.

Now, let's talk about the food. It is Stone crab season and so I opened the evening with a cool order (2) of mouth watering Stone crabs, followed by a Lobster Cocktail Remoulade — a cold appetizer and being quite familiar with N.Y. Prime's Beefsteak Tomatoes and Onion, served with "Brooklyn French" dressing I ordered it for the others...what I really mean is that I let them taste it before I devoured it.

I was disappointed that the last six pound lobster had just been sold and I had to "settle" for a five pounder. O.K., so you're giddy with laughter wondering why I would eat lobster in a steakhouse. N.Y. Prime has the freshest genuine Maine lobster that can be found anywhere outside of Maine - period. I had mine broiled, and since this restaurant offers French service (food displayed and portioned or distributed table-side) I asked for my lobster to be removed from its shell (it was a test which I knew they would pass). Not one single morsel was overlooked by Rodrigo (or me, afterwards). My guests had the Porterhouse for two. They ordered it medium and, lo and behold, it actually came out medium, the very first time. My lovely wife ordered the sea bass because we all wanted to taste something other than the steak and lobster we always order. It was a huge portion, balanced by subtle spices and crisped on top, unveiling a moist, even succulent meat.

Everything is a la carte, so if you order a steak, you'll get a steak and nothing more. Therefore, we also ordered: Garlic Spinach, Sautéed Mushrooms (the best I've had in years), Sautéed Onions and a one pound loaded Idaho potato. Everything was perfect and let me assure you, it has been my experience, time and time again, year in and year out that everything will always be perfect at N.Y. Prime.

And so we come to the desserts: the fabulous, giant desserts. N.Y. Prime has a \$25.00 slice of Chocolate cake that stands about 10 inches tall and is 6 or 7 inches at its widest. It easily serves four and is actually supposed to. However, we also ordered the Cheesecake, the Seasonal Berries, the Key Lime Pie and, my favorite, the White Chocolate Banana Cream Pie.

Some writers use metaphors to describe their dining experiences. For this review let me use a metaphor and ask you all, most respectfully, to take it quite literally, "N.Y. Prime Steakhouse is the top of the food chain."



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