

Great Food, Relaxing Setting



## The Rusty Hook Tavern

I don't know why, but I don't love the name...sort of scares me. Rest assured, however, that that is the only thing I don't love about the Rusty Hook Tavern.

There are about 20 parking spaces adjacent to the restaurant and some might say that adds up to too few, but look across the street and there is a huge Municipal pay-to-park lot...shorter than a short walk.

The Rusty Hook is on the waterfront. Boats tie up within touching distance... small boats, midsize boats and 95 foot plus boats...just bouncing and swaying and adding a soft chorus to the mellow dining experience.

I have eaten in similar restaurants in France, Spain, and Italy, but rarely in this area have I enjoyed the fun of a Marseilles, La Rosa, and Genoa like

atmosphere accompanied by fabulously fresh food...literally right off the boat... because when the Rusty Hook Tavern says catch of the day they mean catch of the day (maybe even catch of the hour). Let me tell you how the menu works: There are about eight or ten different fish entrées and from among them the Rusty Hook buys what the fishermen and fisherwomen have hauled in. So, on any given night there may be two, three, or four, from the list available and then only until each is sold out.

I had Hog Fish. I had Mahi-Mahi. My guests had Yellowtail Snapper. Of course, we all shared. Each available fish can be prepared and served seared or broiled with lemon caper sauce or tomato chermoula. The other catches available from night to night in some combination are Black Grouper, Wahoo, Swordfish, Florida Lobster, Cobia, Flounder, Tuna, Pompano, and Triple Tail.

After each listing is the famous (or, infamous) "MP" standing for Market Price.



The Rusty Hook Tavern doesn't know how much to charge the customers until they know how much they paid for the particular fish. In some venues this situation would be a signal to run for the hills as the price will be exorbitant. Not so with the Rusty Hook Tavern. In fact the prices are too low...but don't tell them.

Now comes the statement of taste; how was the food? Great! Holy Mackerel (not that night, LOL), the food was as close to ideal as is artistically possible (meaning that since each person has specific tastes for spices and seasonings, no one has the right to say which is the "only" way to prepare a dish). I suppose that with the experience of preparing gourmet fish dishes comes the benefit of tweaking each recipe to perfection. The Rusty Hook Tavern has that experience and has tweaked the recipes and this writer was overwhelmed with the subtlety and delicateness of the offerings. You will be, also.

The atmosphere is casual, quaint, bright, clean, and happy. The staff, our server Danielle being an excellent example, is enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and schooled in good timing and being invisibly present for each customer. To me, this is what a good fish house should be; edgy enough to be real and smooth enough to dine in, as opposed to just "eat." The drinks are mixed correctly (we had a hard time deciding which of their special cocktails was best), the appetizers are a grand welcome to the entrees to come, and the desserts and coffees are a bittersweet send-off...happy you were here... sad to see you go. No frets...you'll be back. 🍷

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