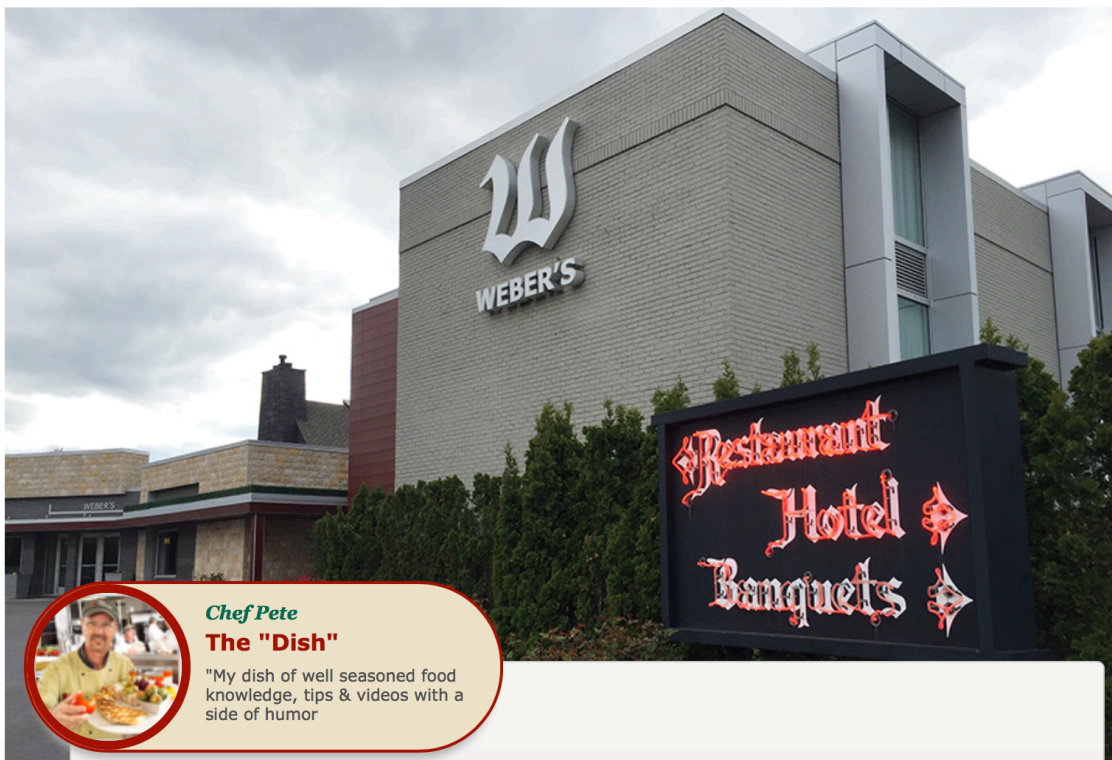




May 20, 2016

<http://freshberries.ninosalvaggio.com/peteblog/restaurant-review-webers-inn/>

FRESHBERRIES



Restaurant Review: Weber's Inn

What is often overlooked and underappreciated in today's here today and gone tomorrow restaurant scene are the few venerable institutions that have proven, decade after decade, that they have the right stuff—that ever so elusive formula for lasting success in the restaurant business.

They've survived Nouvelle Cuisine, Spa Cuisine, Modernist Cuisine, Molecular Cuisine, Fast Food, Slow Food, Farm to Fork, Nose to Tail

and every other imaginative name for “good eats” that creative cooks dream up.

In the end, when others have turned off their stoves, ran out of aerosol for their foam dispensers and unplugged their sous vide machines, these few, time-tested restaurants have proven year after year that what the masses historically crave is good, honest food. Opened in 1937 and still going strong, Weber’s Inn, located on the western fringe of Ann Arbor, is a classic example of a good thing gone right.

The property as a whole contains an inn, which could be appropriately called a 158-room boutique hotel, and the equally well-known restaurant, which is, in itself, a destination.

The inn’s iconic Weber’s Restaurant is divided into 4 distinctly different atmospheric spaces. The Habitat Ultralounge is a local watering hole with large screen TVs, a local bar feel and an outdoor patio. The Ventura Bar is a grotto-like space with dark woods and warm lighting; it’s very cozy and comes complete with its own bar, a 16-tap Cuvinet wine system and a baby grand piano. The Bistro Room, which is adjacent, has wall booths, stained glass panels, and live entertainment 7 days a week. I’m told it has THE most requested seats in the house.

Finally, there is the Main Dining Room, which is the largest and most formal of the four spaces. Its handsome decor lies beneath a vaulted, chalet-style ceiling and includes black leather half-moon booths, sturdy ebony-stained tables featuring armless captain chairs topped with heavy silverware, fine stemware and the ever-classic white tablecloths and napkins.

It’s a timeless look you don’t see too much of nowadays, and personally, I love it.

Weber’s Inn is still family-owned and operated by the Weber family through 3 generations of hands on-stewardship. Its youngest generation, in the name of Brian Weber (a graduate of Michigan State’s prestigious Hotel & Restaurant Management Program and Weber’s Vice President), is personally overseeing the family’s latest menu polishing. In doing so, he’s being equally mindful of the restaurant’s history and its need for future development.

Now, I know something about how hard it is to fine-tune a 5-year-old restaurant’s menu, let alone doing it in as vaunted a restaurant as

Weber's. It has a history of nearly 80 years of fine dining and a former Chef (Chef Curtis—pictured) who developed many of Weber's signature dishes over his 40-year kitchen tenure.

So, what do you do? Well, first, you don't go crazy and make wholesale changes; you make improvements. And, if you're smart about it, you still keep all the ingredients on hand to prepare a few of those retired favorites (like the Coconut Snow Ball) upon special request. And they ARE smart.

As a result, Weber's newest updated menu is an edited blend of their historical favorites, improved favorites and, no doubt, soon to be favorites.

On to the food...

I was seated in a deuce (table for 2) along one side of the dining room, and my meal began with the presentation of a basket of house-made breads and a complementary small coupe of Smoked Salmon Pate, which is standard.

The inn's menu and wine list are old school leather bound and stitched, another historical, old school touch.

By now, I was just in the mood for some classic fare and Weber's menu doesn't disappoint.

I began with their Petite Beef Tenderloin Wellingtons in Demi-Glace, and the Flash Fried Point Judith Calamari, both of which were fork tender and delicious (and I'm a Calamari snob, so you can take that to the bank!). Other starters included Fresh Oysters, Maryland Crab Cakes, Escargot, a Shrimp Cocktail and a Mushroom Sauté.

Weber's also has some classic soup choices, including a different house soup each day and the classic Baked French Onion and Lobster Bisque.

And if you're hell bent on the classics, you just have to order a Caesar salad, right? I did, and what arrived was icy chilled romaine with shredded Parmesan cheese; crisp, buttery croutons; and a creamy Caesar dressing that was everything it should be, especially when topped with freshly ground black pepper.

Other salad choices included a Chicken Gorgonzola, Baby Kale, Boston Bibb, Original Cobb and Double Wedge Iceberg.

Weber's entrees cover 2 full pages. On one page are the Classic American Dinners, on the other page, Specialties of the House. What you'll find throughout are steaks, roasts, fish, seafood, poultry choices, lamb, pasta dishes and just about every imaginable continental classic, all done with Weber's classic flair.

So, what to choose? It all looked so tempting that I decided to leave it up to the kitchen. What did THEY want me to eat?

What arrived was a gorgeous (and I don't use that term often) Prime Rib of Beef, scented with a sprig of house-grown Rosemary and steaming hot Au Jus poured over the rib at table side. Accompanying my rib was an earthenware crock of Au Gratin Potatoes and a newly improved Creamy Horseradish Dressing that Brian Weber is very proud of.

The rib was a perfect medium rare edge to edge and exceptionally tender and flavorful.

It was picture and palate perfect.

The Au Gratin Potatoes were everything you'd hope for—creamy, not too cheesy, firm slices of potatoes and seasoned well.

With my rib, I enjoyed a sample of 3 red wines from their extensive and very reasonably priced wine list. They all complemented the kitchen's choice very well.

It was also difficult to choose a dessert because they too are all house made and WAY too tempting. From among a Strawberry Shortcake, Cheesecake, Carrot Cake, Fudge Brownie Sundae, Sugar-Free Devonshire and more, one dessert caught my attention because I was on this nostalgia kick.

I just HAD to see what they were going to do with...
The Bumpy Cake.

Now, I have a rather strong background in pastries. I've been an Executive Pastry Chef, and I've taught students about pastries in college. Let's just say I know my way around the sweeter side of life. This Bumpy Cake was, in a word, spectacular. Honestly, it was the best I have had, bar none. I'd drive to Weber's just to have this and a glass of cold milk. It was super moist, super tender, creamy, not too sweet and icy chilled. Pastry Chef Marybeth King, you've outdone

yourself.

Bottom line, if you're going to do old school classics, please do them right...like Weber's

As an aside, if you love Weber's pastries, their bakery sells them as whole cakes and tortes and even makes spectacular wedding cakes, which you can see online and order for your enjoyment.

As for the rest, here's my box score. *(5 being highest/best where numbers are listed)

Menu Intimidation Factor MIF 1.0:

There is NOTHING on this menu that you won't instantly recognize and understand. It's an American Classic menu, and as hard as you might look, you won't find too many like it anywhere.

Dress 2.5:

Casual resort wear is appropriate, but you won't feel at all out of sorts in a suit and tie. Actually, you might enjoy donning a bow tie.

The Crowd 3:

Guests range from families of 6 enjoying what perhaps might be an Ann Arbor meal with their college children to young couples enjoying a date night out to handsome older couples with newly pressed suits, perfectly coiffed hair and pearl necklaces leisurely enjoying a sumptuous dinner.

Parking 5:

Tons of parking everywhere.

Bang for the Buck 5:

With a choice of 4 different drinking and dining options; free, live entertainment; very reasonable menu prices and a wonderful atmosphere, you get a BIG bang for your Ann Arbor dining buck at Weber's.

Food Stuff 4.5:

If you miss the days of Haute Continental Cuisine, THIS is your new home. For those who remember the OLD days of Charlie's Crab, the

Original Joe Muer, Fisher 666, Topinka's Country House, and the original London Chop House and Caucus Club, here is a place that is STILL the original.

Energy, Vibe, & the Cool-Wow Factor 3.5:

You've no doubt seen their billboards everywhere in SE Michigan, but if you've never taken the time to discover Weber's, do yourself a favor and check them out.

Weber's is a different kind of hip. Its energy and cool-wow factor is in its history and enjoying a menu that will never go out of style.

Awards:

- Bravo "Excellent" (Trip Advisor)
- Open Table 2015 Diner's Choice
- 2014 Wine Spectator Award of Excellence

About:

- Location: 3050 Jackson Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48103
- Hotel Reservations: 734-769-2500 / 800-443-3050
- Restaurant Reservations: 734-665-3636
- Restaurant Reservations Online: www.opentable.com
- Website: webersinn.com
- Bakery: 734-794-2400
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/WebersAnnArbor>
- Twitter <http://www.twitter.com/WebersA2>

BREAKFAST

- 6:30 AM until 11:00 AM Monday through Friday
- 8:00 AM until 11:30 AM on Saturday
- 8:00 AM until 12:30 PM on Sunday

LUNCH

- 11:00 AM until 4:00 PM Monday through Friday
- 11:30 AM until 4:00 AM on Saturday
- Sunday Brunch 9:30 AM until 1:00 PM

DINNER SERVICE

- 4:00 PM until 9:30 PM on Monday
- 4:00 PM until 10:30 PM Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday
- 4:00 PM until 11:00 PM Friday and Saturday
- 1:00 PM until 9:30 PM on Sunday

Miscellaneous Stuff:

They accept all the usual plastic cards and are wheelchair accessible right off the sidewalk.

This is as close to a family- and children-friendly, high-end restaurant as you'll ever find. They can accommodate everyone and anyone.