

FOOD&DRINK

EDITOR'S PICK: WALKERS FISH MARKET BY SHANNON MASTALER



Delicious, fresh cuisine
in a warm and sophisticated atmosphere

My family is from Nova Scotia, and my earliest memories are of visiting them and seeing everyone go crazy for the fresh seafood and lobster... back then I was too young to appreciate it, but now when I look back, I kick myself for not indulging in one of the province's best gifts.

Not all of us can take a trip out east for delicious seafood, but can enjoy it right here in Burlington, at Walkers Fish Market.

On my recent visit to Walkers, I was happy to discover it was Lobster Fest! And while you can always enjoy fresh Canadian Lobster at Walkers any day of the week, Lobster Fest is a great way to experience some of Chef Michael Levins' signature creations at exceptional prices.

Upon entering the restaurant, my guest

and I are warmly greeted by the hostess. Shown to our seats, we stroll past the bar and can't help notice the large nautical mural on the wall, along with an impressive mosaic tiled bar, white chairs and shutters and large televisions. As we are seated in the dining room, it feels very sophisticated yet still comfortable.

My first thoughts are of a high-end dinner party in one of the Hampton's mansions. The floor to ceiling stone fireplace, modern chandeliers, white wooden shutters, and white leather seats combined with replica ships and dark wood floors offer a modern, fresh, upscale and inviting nautical atmosphere. You'd almost expect to look out the window and see ocean waves crashing along the shore.

.My guest and I order wine, and peruse the menu. And the menu is nothing short of mouth watering, and to my surprise offers options for really, any budget. There are appetizers such as spicy Thai mussels, Cajun fried calamari, coconut shrimp and more.

My guest opts for a classic dish; the jumbo shrimp cocktail and I decide on the grilled sea scallops.

Our server Debbie takes our orders and we are left to decide what we will choose as our main courses – no easy task with a menu that has everything from a raw bar (featuring oysters, tuna rolls and smoked salmon among many other options); numerous soups and salads (such as Nova Scotia clam chowder, blackened salmon salad plus many more); an entire section on 'Fresh

Catches' (including catfish, Ahi tuna and pickerel); steak and seafood combos and of course, Walkers Specialties (with items like haddock and chips, seafood linguini diavolo and Caribbean catfish).

There are about six items I'd like to try, but to remain polite, I decide on the filet mignon and 4oz Canadian lobster tail. My guest chooses the bronzed arctic char with a 4oz Canadian lobster tail.

As we wait for our meals to come, time passes fast... the ambiance makes it easy to get comfortable and enjoy conversation, with the candle burning at our table, it's romantic yet casual – an atmosphere not easily created... Beside us a couple is seated and I overhear that it's their anniversary, I think to myself, what a perfect place to celebrate such a milestone... there are a few other couples, a table of girls and a family among many others in the dining room... some are laughing, some are conversing and all seem to be really enjoying their meal.

Our mains arrive and the scent of garlic fills the air. The dishes are quite impressive – steak cooked to perfection, a large lobster tail, perfectly seasoned arctic char. As we dig in, our conversation stops as we feast on this delicious meal, mmmm... is the only sound coming from our table! Everything we are treated to is perfectly cooked and flavoured and both my guest and I agree that it's the best lobster we've ever had.

Although our tummies are already full, and our taste buds satisfied, we still can't resist the homemade cheesecake (recommended to us), but insist that we'll just have one bite and package the rest up to take home. It arrives; a massive piece of mouth watering cheesecake... lets just say, none of it made it home!

As we drive out of the parking lot and head home, I leave Walkers with memories of an evening filled with fresh and delicious food and superb service.

The dining experience was quite unique; upscale without being stuffy, comfortable and warm.

The cuisine is a modern take on traditional seafood, with only the freshest ingredients used, Walkers certainly impressed both me and my guest. The next time I'm feeling like a fresh seafood dinner and can't make it to my family in Nova Scotia, I'll know exactly where to go!

.....
WALKERS FISH MARKET STEAK SEAFOOD & BAR

4045 Harvester Road, Burlington
(905) 633-9929

www.walkersfishmarket.ca



q&a

WITH CHEF MICHAEL LEVINS
FROM WALKERS FISH MARKET

WHY DID YOU WANT TO BECOME A CHEF?

I was always fascinated with food, things that are available today in supermarkets were not common when I was younger so when I tried my first fresh mango, fresh herbs or washed rind cheese it piqued my curiosity and I wanted to learn and taste everything I could. I would read and reread cookbooks and food magazines like a favorite novel, I wanted to recreate food I only saw in pictures or read about. Experimenting at home was fun but I knew that I had to take it to the next step so I enrolled in George Brown colleges' two-year Culinary Management course which I completed with honors.

HAVE YOU ALWAYS LOVED/SPECIALIZED IN SEAFOOD?

Seafood and fish have always been my favorite thing to cook - everything from simple grilled salmon, a freshly shucked oyster or braised baby octopus.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE CREATION ON THE MENU?

My favorite item on Walkers menu would have to be the Sweetwater Crab Cakes with chile aioli.

WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT BEING A CHEF?

Working as a professional in the culinary field can be very rewarding but being a chef isn't like the food channel, the hours are long, the kitchen can be a very hot and stressful and balancing work and home life can be difficult. You have to be prepared to make a commitment.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE MENU AT WALKER'S?

The menu at Walkers focuses on fresh fish, oysters and seafood and tries to appeal to a wide market . We offer variety of dishes at a reasonable price in a warm, relaxing atmosphere.

WHAT WOULD YOUR LAST MEAL BE?

My last meal would start with a fresh seafood platter with oysters, live scallops, mussels, a variety of smoked fish and eel with A Loire valley Sancerre sauvignon blanc followed by braised octopus, bacalhua potato cakes and an heirloom tomato arugula salad accompanied by a domaine de la romanee-conti pinot noir finishing with a selection of fine cheeses and fruit and 1963 Taylor fladgate port.