

Created by: Debra C. Argen

Escoffier Restaurant, Hyde Park, New York, USA

[Escoffier Restaurant](#) is the award-winning French restaurant at [The Culinary Institute of America \(CIA\)](#) in [Hyde Park, New York](#), where classic French cuisine with a contemporary touch is expertly prepared by the culinary students, and is open to the public.

An elegant setting, white linen draped tables set with pretty china charger plates with pink flowers, sparkling crystal, and impeccable service make dining at Escoffier Restaurant named for one of the most renowned French chefs in the world, Auguste Escoffier, truly a memorable dining experience.



Escoffier Table Looking into Kitchen

Since the restaurant opened in 1973 as the first hands-on public restaurant for the students at the school, it has continued to maintain a reputation richly rewarded with numerous awards. Students prepare and serve à la carte authentic French cuisine at Escoffier Restaurant as part of their degree requirements under the watchful eyes of **Alain V. De Coster**, C.E.C, C.C.A., Chef-Instructor, and **Douglas D. Miller**, CIA '89, C.H.E., Maitre d'Hotél Instructor.

Edward and I had a lovely dinner with 3 of our classmates at Escoffier Restaurant in November 2009 as a celebration of our completion of attending the school's intensive **2-Day Holiday Boot Camp**, and we were definitely impressed with the professional results by the students. The art of French cuisine has always been a passion of mine, and the students serving and preparing the food at Escoffier Restaurant, who were days away from their own graduation, did the tradition of fine French cuisine proud.

As befitting, we began our celebration with glasses of champagne to toast our success and our newly acquired techniques, paired with Amuse Bouches of slivers of headcheese in ice wine on toast. The restaurant features a large arched window that provides diners with the opportunity to watch the students and the chef in action, and since our tables were placed directly in front of the window, it was as if we were watching a well-rehearsed play or a live cooking program. We watched with fascination as the students prepared course after course, step by step from cooking on the stove to the final approval by Chef Alain De Coster before delivery to the dining room.

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Watching the Action in the Escoffier Restaurant Kitchen

We continued our celebration with Les Hors d'Oeuvres Froids (Cold Hors d'Oeuvres), which was a trio of Terrine de Foie Gras Maison, Eschalotte Confités, Brioche Toastée (Duck Liver Terrine, Shallot Confit, and Toasted Brioche); Petite Salade de Betterave, Endive, Pommes Fruit, Hareng, Vinaigrette Crèmeuse (Composed Salad of Red Beets, Endive, Apples, Pickled Herring with Creamy Vinaigrette); and Timbale de Saumon Frais en Tartare et Saumon Fumé, Sauce Légère à L'Aneth (Petite Timbale of Salmon Tartare and Smoked Salmon with Light Dill Sauce), that provided delectable insight into the restaurant's style.



Trio of Appetizers



Our next surprise was a light and refreshing key lime sorbet served in a martini glass and garnished with a mint leaf that was a perfect blend of sweetness and tartness, which was a lovely palate cleanser before we continued with our main courses.

We selected a Chinon "Les Petites Roches," Charles Joguet, Loire, France 2006, 13.5% alcohol to pair with our main courses as we were all going in different directions, which for my classmates Sharon and Sue, as well as for me, was a main course of Les Poissons (Seafood) and we had Homard Thermidor (Gratine of Lobster in its Shell), which was beautifully presented on a large square plate. We had watched the student in the kitchen carefully remove the lobsters from the shells and thoroughly appreciated the effort that went into the preparation of this course. The lobster was cut in half lengthwise, the meat removed from the tail and the claw, and then repositioned in the shell, sprinkled with cheese and browned under a grill, and presented with a mound of yellow rice, oblique carrots, Brussels sprouts, chanterelle mushrooms, haricot

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verts, cippolini onions, and tiny shallots. Although we all commented on the generous portions we all did justice to the lobster.



Homard Therimidor

Our classmate Gene, had Sole de Douvres à la Meunière (Comme Julia l'à Découverte), (Dover Sole Meuriere (Just Like Julia Discovered It), and this was truly a stunning presentation worthy of a top French restaurant. First we watched as one of the students in the kitchen dusted the sole with flour and seasonings and cook it on the stove, next the sole was arranged in a copper pan with accompanying vegetables, which another student delivered to the dining room to finish the preparation tableside. Filleting a fish tableside requires a steady hand, confidence, and a bit of showmanship, and with the careful guidance of Douglas D. Miller, Maitre d'Hotél Instructor, our student waiter easily mastered the art of filleting the sole, expertly plated the fish and the vegetables, created the sauce to pour over the fish, and professionally presented the sole; Julia would have been proud of her.



Preparation Tableside

Edward selected a meat course, Les Viandes, and had a seasonal dish of Côtelette de Marcassin, Champignons des Bois, Gratin Dauphinois (Wild Boar Center Cut Chop, Seasonal Mushrooms, and Au Gratin Potatoes), which was also well presented and consisted of two large standing chops accompanied with a mound of potatoes, and a mélange of small diced root vegetables, on a rich pool of sauce.

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Wild Boar

We continued with a cheese course, with a lovely selection of hard and soft cheeses, followed by a tour of the kitchen, which was buzzing with careful activity like bees in a hive. According to Auguste Escoffier's Brigade de Cuisine or military approach to kitchen hierarchy, each person in the kitchen holds a title and has a special job that he or she performs, from the Chef de Cuisine or Executive Chef at the top, and continuing down the ladder to the Plongeur (Dishwasher) and Marmiton (who washes the Pots and Pans), and each position is important to the overall functioning of the kitchen. It was wonderful watching the students in action as they interacted with each other with professionalism and respect.



Classmates Celebrating in Escoffier Restaurant Kitchen

Although all of the desserts were tempting, including Crêpes Suzette flambéed tableside, we decided on lighter desserts of Glaces Maison (Housemade ice creams) consisting of a trio of coffee, pumpkin cheesecake, and vanilla ice cream, and Sorbets de Saison (Seasonal Sorbets) which consisted of a trio of mango, prickly pear raspberry, and pineapple. As a final sweet memory of our dining experience at Escoffier Restaurant, our waiter brought us a selection of mignardises presented on a silver stand.



Trio of Sorbets

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Escoffier Restaurant is open for dinner Tuesday through Saturday from 6:00 pm until 8:30 pm. The restaurant is closed from December 19, 2009 until January 5, 2010. In late January 2010, Escoffier Restaurant will also be open for lunch from 11:30 am until 1:00 pm.

To make a reservation at **Escoffier Restaurant**, please call 1-845-471-6608, or visit the restaurant website at: www.CIAChef.edu/Restaurants/Escoffier.

For additional information and culinary program schedules, please visit **The Culinary Institute of America** website at www.CIAChef.edu or call them at 1-800-888-7850.

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