

Created by: Debra C. Argen

Polpo Restaurant and Saloon

Enter [Polpo Restaurant & Saloon](#) in **Greenwich, Connecticut** and you feel like one of the 'regulars', even if it's your first time there.



Edward F. Nesta and I began our evening at [Polpo Restaurant and Saloon](#) in the Saloon in April 2006, sitting on the high backed wood stools, chatting with head barman, Marvin Cohen, the quintessential bartender, who is the first to admit that the people not only come in for the classic cocktails, but for the personalities behind the bar, and Marvin is a definite personality. You just know that he has great stories to tell, and he also mixes a great drink. We made our foray into a few of the signature drinks,



Polpo's Bellini, which is nothing like Harry's, but will surely charm and enchant you, and their Cosmopolitan, again tweaked into something that is just a shade off the standard and it works. Aidan, a young bartender from Ireland, brought us a "Laurentini" to sample, which was a martini with a delicious soft edge, which we drank accompanied by what Marvin called 'the best pizza in town', and it was; bite-size and crispy, crunchy, thick and perfectly seasoned. The pizza and drinks alone would make it worth a drive to Greenwich.



The Saloon features stone and yellow walls, the ceiling beams hold a collection of boat photographs and a bit of whimsy with old-fashioned wood skis affixed to a beam, skates hang from another, and snow shoes, grace one of the stone walls. The walls and the tiny octagonal tiles on the floor allude to the age of the building, 1908. Don't be deceived by the Saloon in the name though, this is pure Greenwich, Connecticut, where the Valets park Bentleys, Ferraris and Maseratis for an equally impressive clientele.

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It's a Tuesday, it's Happy Hour, and the young corporate lions join the not-so-young lions to line the bar, while Frank Sinatra music plays in the background, the clientele is very much "in the know."



The restaurant has an upstairs dining room for private parties and à la Carte dining and also an enclosed porch, which offers guests a more intimate dining experience. There are two dining rooms downstairs, as well as tables in the saloon, and the patio is open for dining in the warmer months. Old Hollywood glamour photographs of movie stars like Myrna Loy, Rita Hayward, Clark Gable, and the like line the walls to the second floor. Original artwork and vintage spirits prints add another layer to the already polished patina, but the true 'artwork' is the artistically arranged raw bar brimming with lobsters, mussels, clams and other delectable morsels, and the culinary perfection coming from the kitchen in the talented and capable hands of Executive Chef Franco Maltagliati.

Tiago, from Portugal, brings us the menus as well as the daily menu on a blackboard, and then returns moments later with "Vinnie" a 4½-pound lobster, who he said, "loves water sports, long walks on the beach, and especially windsurfing." Although the Angry Lobster sounded delicious, we decided to let Vinnie keep enjoying his long walks on the beach, and selected the Barramundi, which Adolfo would filet tableside, and the Linguini with Angry Lobster Sauce.

Adolfo brought us an antipasti of fresh parmesan cheese cut from a large wheel of cheeses stacked three high, shaved sobrasada and a mixture of olives, that when eaten with the mix of foccacia and thinly sliced toasted bread with tomato, eggplant and garlic sauce, could have made for an enjoyable small repast, and Roberto from Italy, made sure that we never lacked for anything. When Chef Franco sent out a 'tease' of tender Gnocchi in a Gorgonzola Sauce, our audible sighs could be heard throughout the dining room.



The menu has an excellent seafood selection, as would be seemly with the name of Polpo (which means octopus in Italian), but they also have a varied menu with pasta and meat entrées. For our first course, Edward selected the Mussels in a Tomato and White Wine Sauce, and I selected the Avocado, Lobster and Mixed Greens Salad.



The mussels arrived in a large white bowl that could have easily been mistaken for a sink, it was that large, but Edward had no problem as he savored each and every mussel. My salad was a picture in colorful

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perfection with plentiful lobster sitting on a bed of mixed baby greens and radicchio with a fan of avocado and bright red cherry tomatoes. Adolfo paired our selections with a 2003 Piri Dolcetto D'Alba, 14% alcohol, with a hint of spice and tobacco on the nose, black cherry and just enough tannin on the palate, and had a long finish.



Throughout the evening, owner Ron Rosa, who looks like a Hollywood movie star, was the consummate host, visiting each of the tables to say hello and welcome guests to his restaurant.



The fish arrived for the second course, and it was 'Showtime' as Adolfo perfectly fileted the barramundi. He said that it was 99% bone free, saw one spine remaining, removed it, and it was 100% bone free, accompanied by a plate of broccoli rabe.



The Linguini with Angry Sauce was also very nice, but the fish was sheer perfection that would make fish lovers out of non-fish lovers; it was moist, tender, delicately seasoned with herbs and amazingly delicious.

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Tiago convinced us that we should sample their desserts, so Edward selected the Napoleon made with fresh cream, and I had the hot pecan torte accompanied with espresso nugget ice cream. After enjoying cups of espresso and cappuccino, followed by glasses of port, we went back to the bar to listen to pianist/vocalist Al Di Marco, who was entertaining the packed bar with songs by Billie Holliday, Dinah Washington and others, and to enjoy 'one last story' and a grappa with Marvin. Polpo is open everyday and has live music in the evening from 7:30 pm until closing.

Polpo Restaurant & Saloon, located a short 40-minute drive from New York or a 40-minute train ride from Grand Central Terminal in New York to the Greenwich, Connecticut station and a quick taxi ride to the restaurant, should definitely be a must on your restaurant 'essential list.'

Polpo Restaurant & Saloon

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