

Hoffman: Titanic dinner was more than enough

By Ken Hoffman

Updated 11:44 a.m., Thursday, April 19, 2012

Last Saturday, exactly 100 years to the fateful night, I sat down to the "almost-exact" same 10-course meal that first-class passengers ate just before the Titanic hit an iceberg and sank.

Twelve guests were invited to a press preview of the RMS Titanic's last supper at Cullen's Restaurant on Space Center Boulevard. The beyond-belief dinner will be available through September, in connection with the "Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition" at the Houston Museum of Natural Science.

The dinner check is a might titanic, too: \$12,000, which includes dinner for 12, tickets to the museum, luxury transportation for the evening and a \$1,000 donation to the museum.

I'm sitting here with the menu in front of me.

Hors d'oeuvres: oysters a la Russe, canapes a l'amiral

First course: consommé Olga, port wine and beef consommé, Maine scallops, parsley, celeriac

Second course: poached Scottish salmon, sauce mousseline, cucumber, caviar, chives

Third course: filet medallions Lilli, seared foie gras, pommes Anna, artichokes, truffles, sauce Perigueux, chicken sauté, sauce Lyonnais, stuffed zucchini

Fourth course: roast rack of lamb, mint sauce, roast duck, apple purée, sirloin of beef, pommes chateaux, buttered green peas, creamed carrots, rice pilaf, pommes Parmentier, boiled new potatoes

Fifth course: punch romaine

Sixth course: roast Pennsylvania squab, water cress, herbed croute, bread sauce, game chips

Seventh course: chilled asparagus vinaigrette, salad frisee, oranges, radish

Eighth course: paté de foie gras, celery salad, toasted brioche, sauterne jelly

Ninth course: Waldorf pudding, poached Hill Country peaches, chartreuse jelly, chocolate and vanilla éclairs, French vanilla ice cream

Tenth course: selection of Texas cheese, fresh seasonal tree and vine-ripened fruit

It's the Texas cheese and Hill Country peaches that make this an "almost exact" Titanic menu. But close



enough. In the case of Hill Country peaches, it's probably an improvement.

After watching my table mates wolf down 10 courses of rich food covered with sauce Perigueux, I'm thinking maybe the Titanic didn't hit an iceberg. Maybe it was the sheer weight of the passengers that sank it.

You know me well enough to know I'm not an oysters a la Russe kind of guy. It wasn't deep-fried, and it didn't even come on a hamburger bun.

But I endured ... all four hours of the dinner. Four hours! That's longer than the movie. But it was fun, especially because I had a good seat at the table, near Amanda Norris from the Museum of Natural Science. She's become an authority on the Titanic's story and even carries an artifact - a small cup from the ship - in her purse. So history class ran a little long Saturday night.

This was not the first time I've eaten a replica meal. About 15 years ago, Neil Diamond performed at Compaq Center. A dedicated Diamond fan found out where he ate the night before and invited me to join her and her husband the next night.

He ate Italian ... thank you, Neil Diamond.

First-class passengers on the Titanic enjoyed dinner at 6 p.m. The meal took so long because passengers would leave the table, maybe dance, take a stroll on deck, a dip in the pool or whatever rich people did in 1912. The Titanic was the first ship with an indoor pool. A one-way, first-class ticket cost \$2,500 (about \$57,200 in today's money). The most expensive rooms were about double that.

We had only one timeout Saturday night. I went downstairs at Cullen's to check out the Fab Five, a Beatles cover band, playing in the bar.

What do the Beatles and the Titanic have in common? Both set sail from Liverpool, England, and became worldwide legends. The Beatles took about eight years to break up. The Titanic took only three hours to sink, and Yoko Ono wasn't even onboard.

I picked and poked at my Titanic dinner. I'm not a foie gras fan for lots of reasons. I had never heard of many of these dishes, and I'm funny about eating things I don't know.

But it was cool to see waiters wearing tuxedos and white gloves. Usually people who serve me food are wearing paper hats.

There was one dish that brought me to my knees - the Waldorf pudding. It was on the dessert tray that every guest got. I like bread pudding anyway, but this stuff was the best I ever had.

Keep the roast Pennsylvania squab, just give me a big bowl of Waldorf pudding and a soup spoon. It wasn't just me; everybody at the table was crazy for this pudding, which I'm guessing has a 100,000 calories per serving. Who cares?

I got the recipe from Cullen's executive pastry chef John Weatherly. This isn't the recipe the Titanic chef used, but this one will float your boat, guaranteed.

Cullen's Waldorf Pudding

8 8-ounce ramekins (small bowls)

2 apples diced into 1/4 inch cubes

2 tablespoons butter

2 tablespoons plus 1 cup granulated sugar, divided

4 large croissants

1 quart heavy cream

8 eggs

1 tablespoon vanilla extract

1 cup golden raisins

Heat oven to 350 degrees.

Sauté the diced apples with and 2 tablespoons sugar. Place apples in a refrigerator to chill.

Cut croissants into 1/2-inch pieces. Heat cream to a boil. Mix eggs, 1 cup sugar and vanilla in a bowl. Add hot cream slowly, while continuing to stir. Set this custard aside.

Spray ramekins well with cooking spray. Fill ramekins half full with cut croissants, add apples and raisins. Cover with more croissants. Do not pack bread in ramekins or it will make pudding dense. Pour custard over croissants and let set for 10 minutes to let bread absorb custard. Finish filling ramekins with croissants and custard. Place ramekins in a deep pan with 1/4-inch of hot water. Place in oven and bake for 45 minutes. Stick a knife in custard to check doneness. Put in a refrigerator to cool or serve right away.

ken.hoffman@chron.com

President Lowers Mortgage

If you owe under \$729k you probably qualify for the Govt

www.MortgageRatesExperts.com

A Fruit That Burns Fat?

Celebrity Doctor Reveals 1 Secret To Getting a Flat Belly

ConsumerLifeStyle.org

Man "Cheats" Credit Score

He Added 126 Points To His Credit Score Using This 1 Easy

www.SecretsOfYourCreditScore.org

Ads by Yahoo!