

tried escargot for the first time on a river cruise in Europe and, although it was with some trepidation that I took my first bite, I loved it. Similar to a mushroom, it had been drenched in butter and garlic so it was quite tasty. The second time I had escargot was just recently at the Harbor Fish Market and Grille on the charming peninsula of Door County, Wisconsin. This time the escargot were tucked neatly away under a delicious and flaky crust but again were delicious. You may think a small restaurant in Wisconsin is an unlikely place to find escargot and you are right, but this charming restaurant in a historic building on the main street of Bailey's Harbor features amazing gourmet dining, along with a fantastic view of the bay complete with outside dining.

The large building in which the restaurant is located was added to a smaller building in 1908, which was originally used as an ice cream parlor and later a tavern. The larger building was used as a tavern and dance hall where whole families would come to dance; the children were put to bed upstairs while the adults continued dancing. In the ice cream parlor, cones were only five cents, later on in the '40s and '50s, movies were shown, and there was roller skating on the hardwood floors on Sundays. The building went through a few owners until 1997 when it was bought by restaurateurs Carl and Karen Berndt; our family was thrilled to pay them a visit on a recent visit to Door County.

Carl has been in the restaurant/entertainment business for nearly 50 years and has been a very successful small business owner. Karen and Carl met over 20 years ago when they bred their golden retrievers and it was love at first sight – for owners and dogs! Over the years, all five of their children have worked with them in the restaurant. They have a fascinating story of what they do



# Fish Market Grille

By Jan Ross

when the restaurant is closed for the winter – they spend the time living on their sailboat in the San Blas area of Panama that is only accessible by water and air.

One of the most interesting traditions in Door County is a fish boil where the local whitefish is boiled in an open pot over a fire, but Carl and Karen decided to change this up and offer a lobster boil instead; this has become extremely popular with locals and tourists alike. The boil is actually a three-course dinner which starts with a cup of their creamy Maine lobster bisque, then moves on to the boil which includes a two-pound Maine lobster, baby red potatoes, fresh corn on the cob, New Zealand mussels and steamed clams. The meal finishes with a generous portion of homemade Door County Cherry Bread Pudding.

The lobster boil is so popular that the restaurant serves up to 40 to 50 lobsters a night during the summer! They have a wood-fired pot between the dining room windows

and the water's edge so folks can watch one of the staff run back and forth all evening long, dropping the lobsters into the boiling water and retrieving them. If Mother Nature doesn't think it's a good idea to be outside, they can do the boils in the kitchen, but the outside boils are extremely popular, as you might imagine. Unfortunately, we did not get to experience the lobster boil, but a sample of the lobster bisque made us realize we need to make plans to do so on our next visit.

Everything they serve is made from scratch using local ingredients whenever possible, including garden vegetables, the local famous tart cherries and other kinds of fruit. They buy local fish from the Hickey Brothers Fishery right in Baileys Harbor, fly in lobster from Maine and fish from Hawaii. Their menu changes to fit the seasons and to utilize whatever fresh products are available; however some items are always on the menu.

The popular Harbor Chowder is a whitefish cream chowder, made much

the same as New England clam chowder but using local whitefish to make it the restaurant's own special soup. (As previously mentioned, an amazingly delicious lobster bisque is also available.)

Also on the menu: a to-die-for

Flourless Chocolate Cake, served a little warmer than room temperature which makes it quite literally melt in your mouth. The most popular entrée during our visit was the Chilean Sea Bass which is lightly dredged in potato and gently fried, then served with a lemon beurre blanc. Guests



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hollandaise. There is even a lobster omelet and a Lobster Benedict. Quiches are made with from-scratch crusts with all fresh ingredients and are among the guests' favorites.

Lunch includes all the usual sandwiches plus a traditional New England lobster roll. Vendors couldn't supply the traditional top split buns, so the restaurant just makes their own bread for the lobster rolls. One of their most popular lunch sandwiches is the Whitefish BLT.

Harbor Fish Market and Grille might seem like a small town restaurant, but with their truly gourmet offerings, along with their delicious and beautifully prepared food, you can be forgiven for thinking you are in a restaurant in a large, metropolitan city.

If you can't arrange a visit anytime soon, here is their recipe for Door County Cherry Bread Pudding.

### Door County Cherry Bread Pudding

Cut one loaf of Texas toast bread (or other heavy bread) into cubes. In a loaf pan layer bread cubes with other layers of sweetened Door County tart cherries Sprinkle 1tsp cinnamon on top Mix 3 cups half & half with 4 egg yolks, 2 whole eggs, 1 cup sugar & 1 T vanilla. Pour this mixture over bread/cherries mixture and push bread down into pudding. Bake at 350 degrees until done – approximately 45 minutes. We use a convection steam oven here so we are guessing a bit about the timing — so watch carefully. It can be served warm or cool.



say it is the best sea bass they have ever eaten and we are in agreement after sampling it during our visit. Although the restaurant is designated a "seafood place," their meats are also some of the best available; my steak was absolutely fabulous.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner are served seven days a week. The breakfast menu offers four different types of Eggs Benedict, which are delicious with their house prepared

