

Deseret News

Dining out: Donovan's Steak & Chop House

By Stacey Kratz

Deseret News

Published: Thursday, Nov. 12, 2009 5:16 p.m. MST

Visitors to Donovan's Steak & Chop House are not going to find the kind of astonishing, creative food you'd enjoy at, say, Park City's 350 Main, one of the few restaurants on which I have bestowed a perfect four-star rating.

So how does this restaurant, filling the place formerly occupied by Ruth's Chris Steak House (and, before, that, Baci), rate four stars?

When I do reviews, I try to compare like to like. For example, when I visit a burger place, I compare it to both its fellow Utah burger joints and to a perfect, ideal burger joint that exists in my mind.

And when it comes to steakhouses, I've never been to one that came closer to the picture in my head than Donovan's. The ambience, golden-lit, high-arched and intimate, hasn't changed much from the Ruth's Chris days. And, as I said, the food's not going to surprise anyone.

What will surprise, and delight, visitors is the traditional steakhouse taken to a level of near-perfection as velvety-rich as the gruyere cheese in the au gratin potatoes, polished to a sheen as glossy and blemish-free as the wood paneling.

This is a place dedicated to luxury, and it delivers handsomely. My husband and I were seated at a table with a commanding view of the dining space, with a team of three waiters patrolling our section to make recommendations, deliver plates, sweep away crumbs, keep glasses filled, answer questions and refold napkins.

We started with the mac and cheese martini, Donovan's soft, buttery, crumb-topped macaroni and cheese served in a martini glass. It was cheesy but not too rich, despite the generous helping of chopped bacon in it.

We also shared the chop house salad, crunchy greens with nuggets of tomatoes, red onions, cucumbers, hearts of palm, bell peppers, carrots and bacon, with bitter-salty bleu cheese dressing. I enjoyed the whole salad, and my husband enjoyed everything but the cukes and hearts of palm he left on his plate.

He found total enjoyment, however, once his 10-ounce butterflied filet mignon arrived, cooked medium-well just as asked but retaining its mellow-flavored tenderness. With it he had seasonal veggies — in this case, baby carrots with neatly trimmed green tops and sugar snap peas — and strong-flavored garlic "smashed" potatoes.

Being a fan of more robust steaks, I had the 16-ounce ribeye, beautifully marbled and, at medium-rare, positively dripping with musky juices. Besides the veggies, I had the au gratin potatoes, a firm square of perfectly tender-firm sliced potatoes with sharp, creamy gruyere between each layer.

About those sides: Unlike many steakhouses at this price point, potatoes and seasonal vegetables come with each entree at Donovan's.

They also don't charge for their house-filtered bottled water, and while it's ridiculous to say this makes the place more economical — expect to spend around \$75 a person for a full meal, sans

alcohol — I appreciated those customer-friendly touches.

For dessert, my husband enjoyed a scoop of vanilla ice cream resting on a dark, bittersweet brownie and ladled with mellow chocolate sauce, while I sipped a cup of herbal tea and savored perhaps the best creme brulee I've ever had, with silky custard flecked with vanilla under a thin, crispy burnt-sugar shell.

Appetizers \$8-\$19, soup and salad \$9-\$11, entrees \$28-\$55 (plus market prices for lobster and crab), three-course prix fixe dinner \$40, sides and extras \$2-\$10, desserts \$9.

► **Donovan's Steak & Chop House**

Rating: ★★★★★

Where: 134 W. Pierpont Ave.

Hours: Dinner seating, 5-10 p.m., Monday-Saturday; Closed Sunday

Payment: Major credit cards accepted

Phone: 801-359-4464

Wheelchair access: Accessible; some levels have stairs

Web: www.donovanssteakhouse.com

Also: Private party dining available; valet parking available; casual business attire expected

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