

Lori's Picks

Restaurant Reviews



Century House Hotel/ Restaurant/ Conference Center

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The Capital District has been blessed with a historical gem—the Century House. Located right on Route 9 in Latham, it is a fabulous establishment. You can plan a picture perfect wedding, elegant function, high powered corporate meeting, or a special time out with family and friends in a setting that offers the comforts of today with all the charm, grace, and warmth of an era gone by.

The Century House is steeped in history dating back to 1790 and the Van Rensselaer family. Hitting tough financial times, the Van Rensselaers were forced to sell their land for a mere nine hundred and sixty dollars to their tenants, the Frederic

Roff family. In 1816 Mrs. Roff, disgusted with her husband's philandering ways, oversaw the planning and construction of the original Federal style farmhouse. Fast forwarding a bit, 1949 is when Jim and Dorothy O'Hearn decided to purchase the original farmhouse. Though being advised against it by family and friends, Jim and Dorothy realized something that no one else had. The farm was on the only road between New York City and Montreal, hence, the birth of the Century House. With a great deal of elbow grease and help from their sons and daughter, Jim and Dorothy turned their farmhouse into a haven for weary travelers. They fed them in their own living and dining

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quarters, and made sure they felt like part of the family. The ownership of the Century House has remained in the O'Hearn family to this day. Today Jim and Dorothy's son Tim, daughter Susan, and nephew Colin DeMers (Managing Partner), see to it that their guests' stay at the Century House will be a memorable and special one.

From your first greeting by Century House staff, there is an undeniable feeling that a premium is placed on hospitality. As we were shown to our table I was completely enthralled by the Federalist décor. The main dining room was an addition made to the Century House, though so masterfully done, one would think it was part of the original structure. Hand hewn rich dark wood walls, distressed wood flooring taken from a local structure of the same period, handmade Amish solid wood tables, Federalist chairs, and a functioning centrally located fireplace are all part of the lovely and intimate dining room décor.

As we perused our vast and varied menus, we enjoyed fresh baked focaccia, infused olive oil, and black olive tapenade. With selections ranging from veal Oscar, to homemade turkey pot pie and corn bread, I had difficulty settling on my final choice. Eventually, I decided to begin with a lobster cocktail, while my companion opted for the jumbo lump crab cakes. My lobster cocktail—chunks of Maine lobster meat, diced bell peppers, and scallions all tossed in their house-made remoulade—was divine. The lobster was as fresh, sweet and succulent as could be, and the remoulade was a delightfully light and refreshing complement. My companion's crab cakes were amazing—tender all meat cakes, pan seared with sweet and spicy peppadew aioli, pea shoots, and

field greens. For our next course, I chose the arugula salad while my companion, the Century House lobster chowder. My salad was a wonderful fusion of tangy and sweet. Buttered walnuts, Granny Smith apples, sundried cranberries, blue cheese, and arugula were all tossed in an apple walnut vinaigrette. My companion's lobster chowder was to die for. The Chunks of Maine lobster in a smooth creamy chowder broth was a meal unto itself! For our entrees I decided on the Colorado lamb chops—tender, succulent, flavorful, and cooked to a perfect medium,

with this exemplary meal. Chef Michael Niccoli (graduate of The Culinary Institute of America), has created a fabulous menu and is working some real magic in the Century House kitchen.

We should not have, but we did indulge in dessert. My companion had his all time favorite, Carnegie deli cheesecake. There were many sinful choices, but I had to try their house-made bread pudding. This particular evening, berry lavender was the featured bread pudding, and it was sensational! From the texture to the flavor, it was worth every calorie!

Our evening at the Century House was impressive. From the impeccable service given to all the diners, to the first-rate cuisine, generous portions, and beautiful surroundings, it was a superb evening from start to finish. But perhaps even more impressive, is the partnership that Century House has embarked on this year with the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York. For every meal the Century House serves, whether



as per my request. My chops were served with Yukon whipped potatoes, roasted root vegetables, rosemary lamb jus, mint pesto, and roasted red pepper coulis. Everything about my meal was executed beautifully. My companion had opted for the Cape Cod pot—a seafood lover's dream. Being a native Bostonian I know a little something about seafood, and the seafood at the Century House is the real deal. Fresh caught right out of the waters of New England, the Cape Cod pot was brimming with seafood—lobster, sea scallops, jumbo shrimp, littleneck clams, and chunks of white fish. It was simmered in a saffron fennel fumet and served with a side of pappardelle pasta. Both my companion and I were utterly impressed

in the dining room, wedding, banquet, or meeting rooms, they are donating a meal to the food bank. At the end of each meal each guest signs the "Book of Giving" to memorialize them as taking part in the campaign. In this time of such need in our nation, what a heartwarming thing to hear about. I can't help but think that if this spirit of giving became contagious, imagine what could happen right here in the Capital District!

After sixty successful years of the Century House, not only are they maintaining their high ideals of warm, caring and genuine hospitality, they are bringing that very spirit to a part of the community that needs it most!