

Dining Out: Inn of the Seasons in Onondaga

By Yolanda Wright / Post-Standard contribut...

February 18, 2010, 5:44AM



Onondaga, NY -- Shakespeare's ruthless Richard III announced, "Now is the winter of our discontent," and the villain wasn't talking about the weather.

But on a frigid Thursday evening, at the top of a hill in the town of Onondaga, we forgot Richard's lines and applauded a friendly atmosphere, a good dinner and fine service at the family owned and operated **Inn of the Seasons**.

The handsome landmark building, built in 1824 for Orrin Hutchinson, a brigadier general with the state militia, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Now, executive chef and co-owner R. Bradford Wiese and his wife, Carole, use the front of the house as an old-fashioned formal dining room and the rest as a long bar and large rustic pub with brick walls, tall wood booths and wraparound windows.

White cloths, bright red napkins and votive candles topped pub tables along with dinner menus and lists of wine, beer and 20 desserts.

Chef Wiese's menu offers six appetizers (\$6.25 to \$8.75), 12 entrees called "old favorites" (\$15.95 to \$30.95) and six "Mediterranean specials" (\$15.25 to \$20.95). Entrees include salads, starch, vegetable, garlic toast and soft rolls. A clever children's menu lists five choices (\$6.95 to \$7.95) and suggests adding a fresh fruit cup with each item.

From an extensive wine list, by the glass or whole and half bottles, we chose one of the "winter 20 under \$20" bottles at \$19.95. The medium-heavy white wine from Italy, Masi Modello Bianco, was a perfect partner with strips of warm, crisp garlic toast that didn't stay long in its covered basket.

Still in our sharing mode for an appetizer, we had come to the right place. Instead of three sauteed jumbo shrimp with honey-rum Dijon sauce (\$8.75), our wise waiter offered a fourth shrimp (\$2.50) and delivered tasty twins on separate plates with zesty finishes.

Salads were fresh, crisp and generous. A simple Caesar with chopped light lettuce covered a plate with a new look but a familiar taste with tiny crunchy croutons tucked inside. The house salad mixed greens with tomato and onion slices and honey-mustard dressing.

Entrees were delicious, starting with a fresh Atlantic salmon fillet (\$17.50) dusted with herbs and sauteed. The smooth, moist salmon was served with a sun-dried tomato butter sauce and good garnishes of rice, tender baby carrots and green beans.

Going the Mediterranean way, fork-tender veal osso buco (\$19.95) deserved an encore. A meaty braised shank hugged a hard center bone in thick wine and vegetable stock filled with rich flavor. A side of super scalloped potatoes could take a bow for me any time, even without the welcome carrots and beans.

Other Mediterranean entree choices included manicotti/ravioli platter (\$15.25), pork medallions Francaise (\$15.95) and veal van Marino (\$20.95). Old favorites offered filet mignon (\$22.50), Jersey pork chops (\$14.50) and stuffed chicken breast (\$15.95).

After serious study and a promise that desserts could be shared, we chose a slice of German chocolate cake with coconut filling, pecans and sour-cream frosting (\$4.50). It bowed in on separate plates.

Service from the lone waiter on duty on this cold, quiet evening was remarkably attentive, with wine refills, replacement silver, removal of used utensils and dishes, and interest in our enjoying dinner.

The restaurant takes reservations and has parking beside the hilltop landmark.

The details

» The restaurant: Inn of the Seasons, 4311 W. Seneca Turnpike, Onondaga. 315-492-4001.

» Credit cards? Yes.

» Access to disabled? Yes.

» Hours: 4 to 10 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday; until 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday; noon to 8 p.m. Sunday.

» Cost: Dinner for two with one appetizer, entrees, one dessert, wine, tax and tip, was \$93. Some of us may be tempted to mimic his famous soliloquy this month when frosted windows hide mountains of snow and we hibernate until the thaw.