

# FISHERMEN'S VOICE

Vol. 10, No. 5 – May 2005

*News & Comment for and by the Fishermen of Maine*

**FREE**

## **Waiter, Oh Waiter**

Under the “Too bad we don’t” category in this country is the position of waiters and waitresses. In many other countries, waiting on tables can be a lifelong and respectable occupation. Waiters are trained in the art of serving and earn a decent living. Attitude here seems to be—if all else fails can always be a waiter, often it shows. As this incident reflects.

True date of our 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary with AJ’s age unmentioned birthday nearby. We’d celebrated the “Knot” event earlier in Key West so this evening was low pressure. Decided to try a restaurant run by an old Englewood hand. A real character with an eccentric reputation. Place where when everything’s together, the food is good and evening is fun. Décor is eclectic, gaudy, failed Italian with Asian highlights and British country sidepieces.

As the maitre d’ seated us, we commented on this gentleman who was obviously one of the staff; though, from his white double breasted suit, black shirt and bright yellow tie with black undertones, one couldn’t assume his position. He sported a full head of grey-white hair that any male of 50+ would kill for. We waited a bit more than the requisite for service, while looking over the sparse crowd and commented that a lot of snowbirds had headed north by now. Finally, the white suit with great flourish descended upon us.

“Would you like something from the bar?” he asked.

“Perhaps some wine,” I say and he launches into grand description of the generic house varieties.

I interrupt, “Do you have a wine list by chance?”

“Wine list,” he questions and zings back again to the dissertation on house varieties.

“Ah, I think we’d like a bottle,” and to keep his battery charged I asked with a bit of insistence, “What do you have?”

“Ah, yes,” he relented “the wine list,” and regally marched off leaving behind a cloud of very bad cologne.

AJ and I looked at each other and grimaced. Wondering where #13 evening was headed. We were enjoying the karaoke guitar player. However, I thought he had a speech defect but later realized he spoke only with broken English.

With moderate delay our waiter, who is now nicknamed for a rather raffish Mafiosi returns, lands the wine list on the table and sails off to other missions. Good ten or fifteen minutes he’s back.

In a heavy accent, “Haf you decided on your dinner?”

“Yes, but we’d, ah, like a bottle of wine before we order.”

“Wine?” he questions with raised bushy eyebrows, “Oh yes.”

“We’ll have the Pedroncelli,” adding tongue-in-cheek, “the red.”

Another wait and “John Gotti look-a-like” flies in cradling the bottle above eye level and keeps it there. With a smile to AJ, I half stand to read and approve the label.

Now this is a fine(ish) dining restaurant. About as good as it gets in this part of southwest Florida. Plate glass over white tablecloths. After nosing and tasting the wine, AJ remarks on the mismatched and chipped glasses and asks would there possibly be something more appropriate for the red. For once we watch John go and return with balloons.

AJ orders rack of lamb medium rare and I an old favorite, Chicken Marsala. Caesar salad came and was excellent as was the bread basket with olive oil for dipping.

Evening is beginning to now wear thin. Hungry time as “Mr. Gotti” swoops in and with grand gestures sets plates of food in front of us. AJ and I sort out who ordered what.

We tentatively sample. Chicken was as good as I remembered. AJ’s lamb, god’s promise, must have been sawed frozen to about quarter-inch riblets. Done to look like a large meal.

“Lee, there’s no lamb flavor and it’s well done.”

I sample. “Not only is there no lamb here,” (it was lamb) “but it’s lived in a freezer way too long.”

“Gotti” returns in a few minutes and he immediately says, without even a question, “The chicken is great and the lamb, the lamb is excellent,” and with a wave of his hand starts to say something else. I head him off.

“The lamb has no flavor and tastes like an old freezer.”

With this he turns to the nearby tables, throws his arms in the air and begins a tirade.

“In four years I’ve never had a complaint, everyone loves our lamb,” and on and on imploring all within hearing of the impossibilities of anything but the finest lamb and the implied imbecilities of these two “people”. Finally he stalks off talking to himself and any who couldn’t help but hear.

We burst out laughing, this guy was too much. With amazement in his voice, a guy at a nearby table says, “Do you suppose he expects a tip?”

Crazy! Through the evening we watched one couple under “Gotti’s” care simply get up and leave. Another gentleman in a raised voice called him a “bad waiter” when his bill came. Third couple were grimacing and shaking their heads while a table of eight got up and moved to another waiter’s domain. How to work for nothing and drive business away.

Chalk up another memory for the rocking chair days!! And, oh yes, we left the big zero for a tip.

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We really enjoyed the Cuban restaurants in Key West this winter and this was one of my favorites with black beans and yellow rice.

### **Cuban Roast Chicken**

2-3 lbs. chicken split in half  
8 cloves garlic crushed  
1 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon pepper  
1/2 cup each orange juice and lime juice

Place each half in a gallon Ziplock bag with half the marinade in each. Refrigerate all day turning a few times. Heat oven to 400 degrees. Put chicken in a large baking pan. Pour some of the marinade over and roast for one hour. Baste often with pan juices.

Fair winds and good roads.

*Lee S. Wilbur*