

EATING OUT

“And don’t forget to bring your Caesar Salad dressing” said a friend the other day as we were finalizing plans for a pot-luck dinner.

I must say, somewhat immodestly, that in my view, which is shared by many, I make the best Caesar’s you’ve probably ever tasted. I see the skeptical look on your face but some day you may be privileged to taste it and then I know you will join the many fans.

“What’s so great about it?” I hear you ask. Well I must go back a number of years to the 70’s when fine Restaurants would have the Maitre’d make your salad and dressing at your table. Some of you might remember those days. Well, I just watched how the anchovies and garlic were mashed, a raw egg added plus lemon juice, Worcestershire sauce and Tabasco to add zest and the whole thing whisked as oil was drizzled in. I make mine in the blender and do add a tsp. of Dijon and the oil (I prefer Canola) drizzled in ‘til a mayonnaise is formed. It’s quite delicious. I sometimes think it would be nice to again have food prepared at your table but I don’t think it will happen what with the shortage of trained staff and numerous other concerns

I remember eating at Simpson’s on the Strand in London. They carried table preparation to the nth degree; even the roasted meats are wheeled up for you to select what you want and to advise the waiter on the size of slice etc. Some Hotel banquets were handled in much the same way with the wait staff carrying platters of meat and vegetables which they served you in the quantities you asked for. I think this practice too is disappearing and everything is being geared to Buffet Service which I am increasingly getting tired of.

We are fortunately well served in the County with a range of eating establishments from basic diners through family restaurants to higher level fine dining and we have tried most of them from time to time. Eating out is a pleasure that Valerie and I really enjoy although we don’t do it as often as we used to. Perhaps this is just as well since, as you get older, you seem to become more critical of food in restaurants, particularly if the food at home is pretty good.

On my birthday this year Valerie treated me to dinner at one of our finer restaurants. The food was well presented and flavourful but unfortunately the salmon and the scallops were overcooked. I put this down, at first to my critical nature but several days later we were going to the Regent and reserved for dinner before the show and one of the appetizers was Jumbo Scallops on a special tomato mayonnaise. The scallops were beautifully cooked, the way they should be, and the sauce was absolutely perfect. So it obviously wasn’t just my critical nature at the first place.

We have the two granddaughters and their parents visiting. They have rented a cottage locally and have been over several times. They always get special foods when visiting and just love to come to grandma and grandpas.

This year we arranged to take the family to Fort Henry for the Sunset Ceremony. After arriving we toured the Fort which was a first time for them and proved to be of great interest. Grandma even passed the test in the reenactment of a school room lesson by answering the schoolmaster’s question of the makeup of the Union Flag (Union Jack is only used if the flag is being flown on a ship, so we learned).

At 5.00 p.m. they were our guests at the “Officers Mess” and had a meal they chose from the menu served by our “own” Officer. The granddaughters especially liked the “mess” rules that you don’t say please or thank you to the server, although they’re so well “trained” that they couldn’t help themselves from being polite. The food was excellent and everyone enjoyed what they had selected. Our officer then escorted the 6 Jacksons to our VIP seating (individual chairs on the 1st balcony) where we watched the most impressive show capped off by a brilliant display of fireworks. What with cannons and muskets and the boom of cloudbursts of fire it was an event hard to duplicate anywhere.

We had taken the two grandsons who stayed with us last summer to the same dinner and show. As the show began the boys displayed a very blasse air that lasted for about 5 minutes until they became totally enthralled. Enjoying eating out depends on a number of things other than the food. The ambience of the establishment, the service and most of all the company are what makes an enjoyable, satisfying and most of all a memorable evening. No, we’re not going out tonight but seeing how the granddaughters enjoyed their salmon, I’m doing salmon fillets poached in orange juice and spices for us tonight.

Bon Appetite

-John A Jackson

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