

LAMORINDA WEEKLY



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A Visit to Lafayette's Yankee Pier

By Suzie Iventosch

I recently attended a birthday gathering at Yankee Pier in Lafayette. This was fortuitous, because I'd been wanting to try this restaurant since it opened on January 12 of this year. Yankee Pier, a member of the Lark Creek Restaurant Group, offers a variety of fish and seafood dishes, with chicken and beef entrees for non-fish lovers, and an incredible array of sides, including the Big Fat Buttermilk biscuit with red pepper jam, whipped potatoes, sautéed spinach with red onion and, my favorite, roasted butternut squash and rainbow chard. It is also quickly becoming famous for Chef Michael Dunn's New England clam chowder with dill drop biscuits.

Dunn, who grew up in California and made frequent visits to family in Boston, has a sense of pride and heritage in cooking the restaurant's New England-style items as well as the local catch, offering fresh fish from coast to coast.

"We're trying to give a good, quality product and a great dining experience," said

Dunn. "We offer customers a lot of flexibility in ordering their meals, and we try to be family-oriented."

He also noted the restaurant uses only the freshest ingredients and supports small local growers whenever possible.

The food did not disappoint, with a nice selection of seasonal fresh fish served grilled, oven roasted or blackened, beer-battered fish & chips, fried Ipswich full-bellied clams, live Dungeness crab and lobster bisque with a brandied whipped cream, to name a few items.

Though our waiter tried to convince us otherwise, no one ordered the famous clam chowder. Feeling remiss, I called Chef Dunn the next day and he was kind enough to share his recipe with us. We made it at home last week, and it is by far the best chowder I've ever tasted. And the biscuits were amazing.



Lafayette's Yankee Pier Chef Michael Dunn
Photos courtesy Wagstaff Worldwide

Dill Drop Biscuits

INGREDIENTS:

- 1) 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2) 2 tablespoons sugar
- 3) 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 4) 1 teaspoon salt
- 5) ½ cup shortening
- 6) ½ cup buttermilk
- 7) 1 cup sour cream
- 8) 4 tablespoons Fresh Dill
- 9) ½ teaspoon Fresh Ground black Pepper
- 10) Egg wash or melted butter

Preheat oven to 425

Procedure

In a large bowl, sift together the dry ingredients. Using a pastry cutter, cut in the shortening until the mix resembles coarse meal. In another bowl mix the buttermilk, sour cream, dill and black pepper. Make a hole in the center of the dry ingredients and pour in the liquid. Fold in the dry ingredients and mix till just moistened. Using a teaspoon, drop the batter onto a buttered sheet pan. Brush with the egg wash and bake for 8 minutes. Rotate the pan and cook for 4 more minutes.

Note I cut the sour cream in half, because the batter was getting too soft and they came out plenty moist in the middle.*

Yankee Pier Lafayette, 3593 Diablo Blvd.,
Lafayette, 925/283-4100 www.yankeepier.com
Serving from 11:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday thru Thursday
And, from 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday



Michael Dunn's New England Clam Chowder

Ingredients:

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| 1) | 4 cups | Small Dice white onions |
| 2) | 4 cups | Small Dice celery |
| 3) | 4 cups | Small Dice Red Potatoes (cooked) |
| 4) | 2 cups | Small Dice Bacon (Raw) |
| 5) | 2tsp. | Chopped Thyme |
| 6) | ½ lb. | Butter (2 sticks) |
| 7) | 1 cup | All-Purpose Flour |
| 8) | 1tsp. teaspoon | Black Pepper |
| 9) | 1tsp. tablespoon | Kosher Salt |
| 10) | 4 quarts | Clam Juice |
| 11) | 1 quarts | Whole Milk |
| 12) | 1 teaspoon | Tabasco |
| 13) | 3 lbs. | Chopped clams (fresh if available) |



Method: Start by cooking the bacon at a low temp in a heavy bottom pot. When the bacon is crispy remove and drain the grease. In a stockpot cook the onions, celery, red potatoes and bacon with the half pound of butter. Cook until the vegetables start to get tender and add the flour. Continue to cook, stirring constantly, till the flour and butter are incorporated. Meanwhile, in a separate pot, combine the milk and clam juice and bring to a boil. Slowly add the milk-clam juice mixture to the vegetable pot in four intervals. Make sure the soup thickens with each addition and continue to add the cream mixture till finished. Add the thyme, salt, pepper, Tabasco, and chopped clams. Let the soup cook for 30 more minutes to make sure the roux is fully cooked out. Serve immediately, or cool and store in refrigerator for serving later.

Note I cut the recipe in half and it was plenty to serve six large bowls of soup!*

Susie Iventosch

Susie can be reached at suziven@gmail.com