

# Doris & Ed's

Highlands, NJ

By Iris Goldberg



I love looking forward to a meal in a favorite restaurant. We all have them—those special places that over the years have never wavered and can always be counted on to delight. This month, Michael and I had the opportunity to plan a visit to Doris & Ed's, located off of Sandy Hook Bay in Highlands. This is a place which I am quite sure is familiar to many of our readers. It has been a renowned seafood restaurant for decades and diners from all parts of the state gladly make the trip, even when they are not vacationing “down the shore.” What some may not be aware of, however, is the story behind Doris & Ed's.

I was surprised to learn, some years ago, that the owner/operator of Doris & Ed's is

actually not Doris or Ed but a guy named Jim. Back in 1978, just around the time that Michael and I moved to New Jersey, Jim Filip purchased the traditional fish house and obviously decided to keep the name. It was not long before news spread that Doris & Ed's offered a unique dining experience. In those days reservations were not accepted and I remember crowds gathering even before the doors opened, especially on weekends during the summer. There is a small entrance area where it was not unusual for 50 or more people to be waiting for a table to open up. Many brief relationships were formed in an attempt to have the time pass more quickly. Even then, Michael and I, who were not

yet thirty years old, considerably thinner and certainly not the “foodies” we are today, recognized that the fare at Doris & Ed's was superb.

So it was with great anticipation that we reserved a table on a Thursday evening as an ending to a day of business appointments in southern Jersey. Being that it was off-season and during the week, we had no problem. Upon entering the restored century-old inn, we were greeted by Wade, who has been at Doris & Ed's for 37 years. We spent some time reminiscing with him and marveling about how the Jersey shore has changed over the years. He obviously loves working at the restaurant and takes great pride in its success.

On the drive home it occurred to me that I should have asked Wade if he had known Doris &/or Ed.

Wade escorted us to a cozy window table overlooking the bay. The mid-autumn sky still held some light but quickly darkened as we ate. Since Jim Filip is a well-known connoisseur of fine wines and his extensive wine list has been awarded the Wine Spectators' Award of Excellence yearly, since 1985, Michael was immediately engrossed in making a selection. After some discussion with Wade, he decided upon a 2005 Sonoma Cutrer Russian River Valley Chardonnay.



**House Smoked Salmon Panini with Horseradish Chive Crème Fraiche and Caviar**

With that task out of the way, we focused on the appetizers.

At this point I must mention Chef Russell Dare who has been at Doris & Ed's for about twenty years. He has won many awards for his New American cuisine and divides the menu at Doris & Ed's between his nouvelle "The Shore Today," which features weekly creations based on seasonal availability and his traditional "The Shore Yesterday," which does not change and offers all of the standard seafood favorites. Since Michael and I don't get to visit Doris & Ed's all that often, we decided to explore "The Shore Today." The appetizers included a diverse selection of tempting starters. I had no trouble deciding on the House Smoked Salmon Panini with Horseradish

Chive Crème Fraiche and Caviar. This "sandwich" of everything delicious (the salmon was done to perfection) was one of the most enjoyable dishes I have eaten and I savored every bite. Michael ordered the Carpaccio of Tuna with Truffle Oil, Artichokes and Shaved Pecorino. Of course I needed a taste and agreed with Michael that the Tuna was exquisite. So far, we were batting a thousand!

The entrée list was equally enticing with a tantalizing selection of creatively prepared seasonal fish. The most intriguing item for me was the Sautéed Quinalt River Sturgeon on Herbed Couscous with



**Carpaccio of Tuna with Truffle Oil, Artichokes and Shaved Pecorino**

Sun-Dried Tomatoes, Artichokes and Mushrooms in a Marsala Demi-Glaze. My dad used to buy smoked sturgeon and I remembered how much I enjoyed it then so I was anxious to try this fish prepared in a different way. I couldn't have been happier with my choice. The fish was delicate and flavorful and the couscous, a perfect companion. The vegetables and the demi-glaze provided great texture and elegant taste for both. My only problem was the ample portion size prevented me from finishing the entire dish. Michael chose the Grilled Swordfish on a Parsnip Puree with Pumpkin Coulis and Fried Spinach. He really enjoyed his hearty fish with its unique sauce and thought the spinach added a great texture, as well. Both of our palates were filled with the residual flavors of the fish

and we were lingering over our delicious wine when Wade came to remind us to make our dessert selection.

There isn't enough space to list all of the wonderfully creative and tempting desserts offered at Doris & Ed's. From the Chef's selection of cheeses, to the fresh fruit, pies, homemade ice creams, tarts and cakes and the sinful sauces to the international and flavored coffees and the amazing selection of dessert wines-any sweet craving can be more than satisfied. Even with all of this available, we decided to go with the evening's special, which is cleverly named "Soup & Sandwich." This

little creation consists of a melted peanut butter panini that one dips into a warm chocolate sauce. I know this was my second panini of the night but let me tell you that I have never eaten anything quite like it before. It's peanut butter and chocolate and it's warm. Need I say more?

As if the decadent dessert wasn't enough of a special ending to our meal, we were honored when Jim Filip came over to our table to say hello. He is delightful and we were grateful for the opportunity to tell him how much we had enjoyed our food and our evening at Doris & Ed's. I could have asked him why he never changed the restaurant's name but I prefer to leave it as a mystery.

*Doris & Ed's is located at 348 Shore Drive, Highlands, NJ 07732, (732) 872-1565. ■*