

# Grey Rock at Heidel House, a true fine dining experience

By Julie Quinn

Impeccable.

It's a word you don't get to use often. The highest standards. Faultless.

I'm a "regular guy" kind of gal and truly didn't know how much I'd appreciate being treated like an A-lister until I spent an evening with the impeccable service at Grey Rock, one of three dining opportunities at Heidel House Resort & Spa on the shores of Big Green Lake.

We arrived and entered the cozy bar area, forgoing the lounge's fireside seating and opting for a place at the bar, soon wishing I could take the stool home with me. Our bartender Angel offered to take our coats, which I don't think I've ever encountered before – the occasional hostess, yes, but never a bartender.

We must have looked comical as we pondered that a moment before handing them over to her.

Angel armed us with a wine list, seasonal drink menu, and over 60 martini recipes to consider, as well as a choice of jumbo shrimp cocktail, bruschetta, escargot, or a garlic and avocado loaf topped with cheddar cheese and served with a sweet chili reduction to start us off. The full-service bar was also stocked with an amazing number of high-end liquors.

I went with the trusty Cosmopolitan while my guest enjoyed the chocolaty goodness of a Mocha Martini as we enjoyed the ambiance, made even better by the holiday decorations provided by Embellishments.

I was telling my guest a bit about the state's deepest lake and the many amenities at Heidel House – including two additional restaurants, Evensong Spa, the Escapade yacht, and lodging – when Night Manager David Nick volunteered to take us on a quick tour of the hotel before dinner.

We got to imagine a night's stay in the Northwoods Room, the Lakeview Room with its semi-private sitting area and balcony, and the one-room suite with a view of the water, a large common area and wet bar. Some come with a fireplace, some with a whirlpool, and most can connect to other rooms to create a series of suites for families or groups.

As we headed back, David took us past the pool, hot tubs, fitness room and game room, telling us about their vacation houses, including the Guest House with 10 rooms with private baths that John Travolta rented during EAA AirVenture.

We couldn't wait any longer for what promised to be a delicious meal – we'd already checked out the menu online and had imagined the many possibilities. Our hostess led us down the curved staircase, past a magnificent Christmas tree done up in jewel tones. Angel called it "The Dr. Seuss Tree" because of the bright colors and eclectic ornaments.

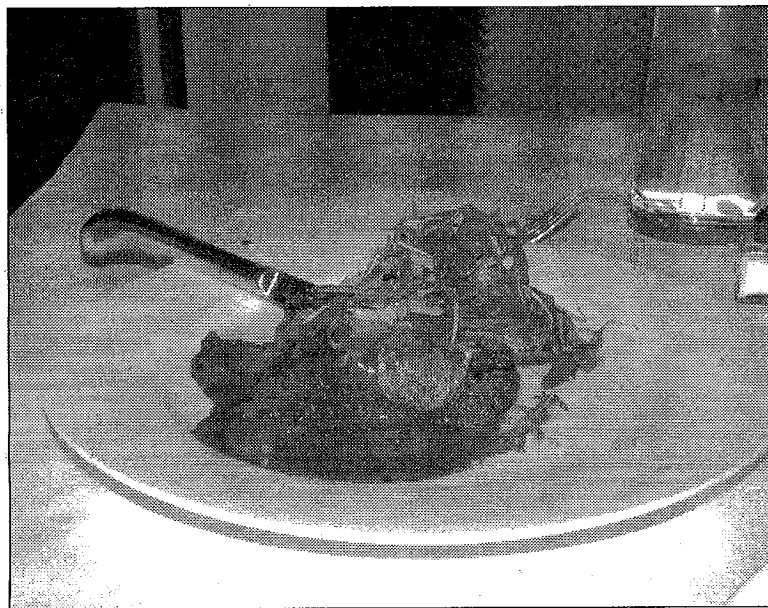
We were taken through the first dining room with a fireplace and into the glass-lined area that would offer amazing sunset views of the lake in the summer. I spotted a well-dressed waiter with a pitcher of ice water waiting in the wings for us to get settled, and I said, "I could get used to this! People anticipating my every need!"

Phil fluidly presented our



BERLIN JOURNAL NEWSPAPERS PHOTO

**OUR WAITER, PHIL KRZYSKO, anticipated our every need while dining at Grey Rock. They promise (and deliver) a playful attitude with a timeless menu.**



BERLIN JOURNAL NEWSPAPERS PHOTO

**GREY ROCK'S STEAK DIANNE is a peppercorn crusted hanger steak, pan seared and brandy flamed. It's served with seared greens, garlic whipped potatoes and a mushroom pan jus.**

menus, began filling our glasses, and ran down the night's specials. The soup du jour was a spicy shrimp creole which accompanied the menu's sweet potato bisque, and the entrée was a marlin that sounded pretty spectacular as he described its preparation, but I have to admit I was already distracted by the impressive wine list. Sensing my impending panic at making just the right choice, Phil asked if I was thinking of white or red, then suggested their Malbec from Argentina. My guest said he'd have an old fashioned if they were "real" and muddled (of course the were!) and not made with a mix (of course they're not!) and Phil correctly guessed it should be made with brandy.

The Malbec was something to be reckoned with. It was so smooth it was as if I had nothing of actual substance in my mouth, just the great taste.

Phil then presented three breads with three spreads to keep us experimenting with taste combinations before bringing us our salads. My guest enjoyed the Caesar, served in a Parmesan tuille, while I had the Heidel salad that was tossed with cranberry-dijon vinaigrette. I even ventured out there and ate most of the balsamic marinated pearl onions, which I was surprised to find I liked.

You should know that they

lightly hand-toss their salads, and if you like your greens dripping with dressing you should ask for additional on the side. They're happy to oblige, and they quite willingly make substitutions with the sides, as well.

I went with the 9-ounce filet mignon, served with garlic whipped potatoes, a béarnaise sauce, and crispy onion rings. I traded the grilled asparagus for bacon seared broccoli and had them add shrimp to my entrée. I also had the option of having it bacon-wrapped or smothered in gorgonzola.

My guest had the Steak Dianne: a peppercorn crusted hanger steak, pan seared and brandy flamed. It was served with seared greens, the garlic whipped potatoes and a mushroom pan jus.

The steaks truly melted in our mouths. They were grilled to perfection, and all the sides worked together with varying tastes and textures. It was dining bliss.

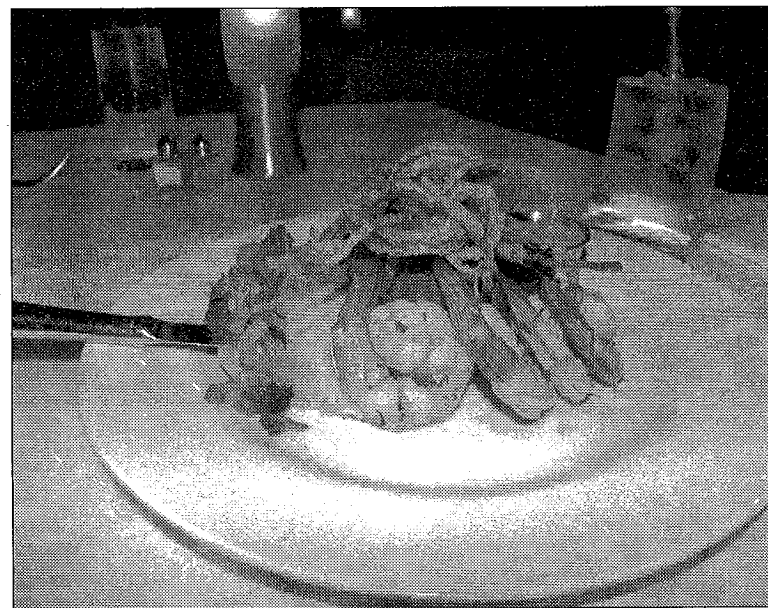
Phil had the checking in down to a science ... never leaving us to want for a moment while not hovering.

Dessert? Why of course! While our meal was perfectly filling, the sweets were too enticing to ignore. Would it be the pumpkin walnut crumble? The blackberry cheesecake? How about the cherry brandy tart a la mode with caramel?



BERLIN JOURNAL NEWSPAPERS PHOTO

**THERE ARE OVER 60 martini recipes to choose from at the Grey Rock lounge. Enjoy your favorite in the relaxed, lakefront setting with an urban flair.**



BERLIN JOURNAL NEWSPAPERS PHOTO

**MY 9-OUNCE FILET MIGNON was grilled to perfection. I had it with the garlic whipped potatoes and bacon seared broccoli, and had the chef add shrimp.**

No, they had us at crème brûlée! We passed on the strawberry champagne and went with the classic vanilla. And for total decadence, we also wanted to try one of the Grey Rock's many ice cream drinks, ordering the grasshopper.

Grey Rock's menu is perfect whether you're a true foodie or a more down-to-earth eater. From the sea they have pecan scallops, walnut encrusted walleye, roasted garlic broiled shrimp, and mussels fra diavolo. They also offer a brown sugar and chile rubbed ribeye, and a braised lamb shank. Their vegetarian cuisine includes a three cheese tortellini, sweet potato gratin, scallion duchess potatoes, and fettuccine fra diavolo.

They have several Heidel House signatures, as well. The filet oscar has three tenderloin medallions topped with blue crabmeat, asparagus and béarnaise sauce. The veal saltimbocca is thinly sliced and layered with fresh sage and prosciutto, pan fried and served with a pesto risotto cake, broccoli, carrots and an herb demi glace. The horseradish crusted chicken is a tenderized breast on a bed of sautéed mushrooms with scallion

duchess potatoes and a garlic béchamel. And then there's their pesto marinated grilled pork loin with the sauce choron.

And remember, this is just one of the Heidel House restaurants! The Sunroom also has a fantastic menu, and the BoatHouse Pub is the place for casual entertainment from early spring to late fall, as well as special occasions. In the summer you can also pop into the Pump House Parlor for hand-dipped Kemp's ice cream.

The Heidel House in Green Lake offers a true dining experience, but so much more. Consider a romantic escape, a golf excursion, or a sight-seeing cruise aboard the Escapade yacht.

Visit their website at [heidel-housel.com](http://heidel-housel.com) to learn more, or call to make reservations to dine, stay or enjoy one of their upcoming events. Locally the number is (920) 294-3344 and toll free it's (800) 444-2812.

Grey Rock's current winter hours are Thursday through Saturday serving 5 to 10 p.m., with the lounge opening at 4:30 p.m. Enjoy piano entertainment on Saturday from 7 to 10 p.m. They are located at 643 Illinois Ave.