

EPICUREAN TRAVELER

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Sample the Delectable, Local Fare at the Harbor Fish Market and Grille in Door County, Wisconsin

by Jan Ross | Food, Food blog, Recipes | 0 comments



Tucked away in tiny Bailey's Harbor on the charming and beautiful Door County peninsula is a hidden and undiscovered treasure which you would do well to locate on your next trip.

[Harbor Fish Market and Grille](#) is a wonderful, gourmet restaurant in a historic building on the main street through town. Featuring a lovely view of the bay complete with outside dining, the large building in which the restaurant is located was added to a smaller building in 1908. The small building was originally used as an ice cream parlor and later a tavern, and the larger building was used as a tavern and dance hall.

Whole families would come to the dances, and the children were put to bed upstairs while the adults continued dancing. In the ice cream parlor, cones were only 5 cents, and later on in the 40's and

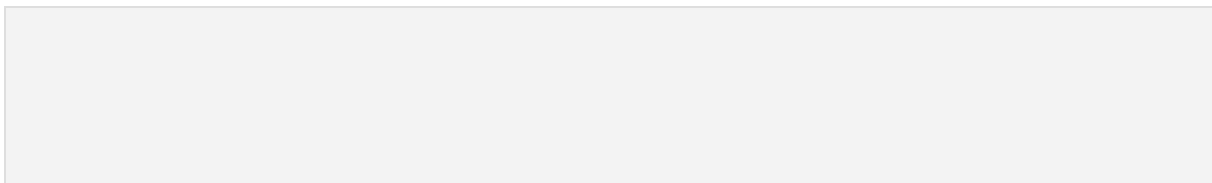
50's, movies were shown, and there was roller skating on the hardwood floors on Sundays. The building went through a few owners until 1997 when it was bought by restaurateurs Carl and Karen Berndt, and we were thrilled to pay them a visit on a recent visit to Door County.

Carl has been in the restaurant/entertainment business for nearly 50 years and has been a very successful small business owner. Karen and Carl met over 20 years ago when they bred their golden retrievers and it was love at first sight – for owners and dogs! Over the years, all five of their children have worked with them in the restaurant. They have a fascinating story of what they do when the restaurant is closed for the winter – they spend the time living on their sailboat in the San Blas area of Panama that is only accessible by water and air.



Lovely view of the bay.

One of the most interesting traditions in Door County is a fish boil where the local whitefish is boiled in an open pot over a fire, but Carl and Karen decided to change this up, and offer a lobster boil instead, which has become extremely popular for both locals and tourists alike. The boil is actually a three course dinner which starts with a cup of their creamy Maine lobster bisque, then moves on to the boil which includes a 2# live Maine lobster, baby red potatoes, fresh corn on the cob, New Zealand mussels and steamed clams, then they finish with a generous portion of their homemade Door County Cherry Bread Pudding.

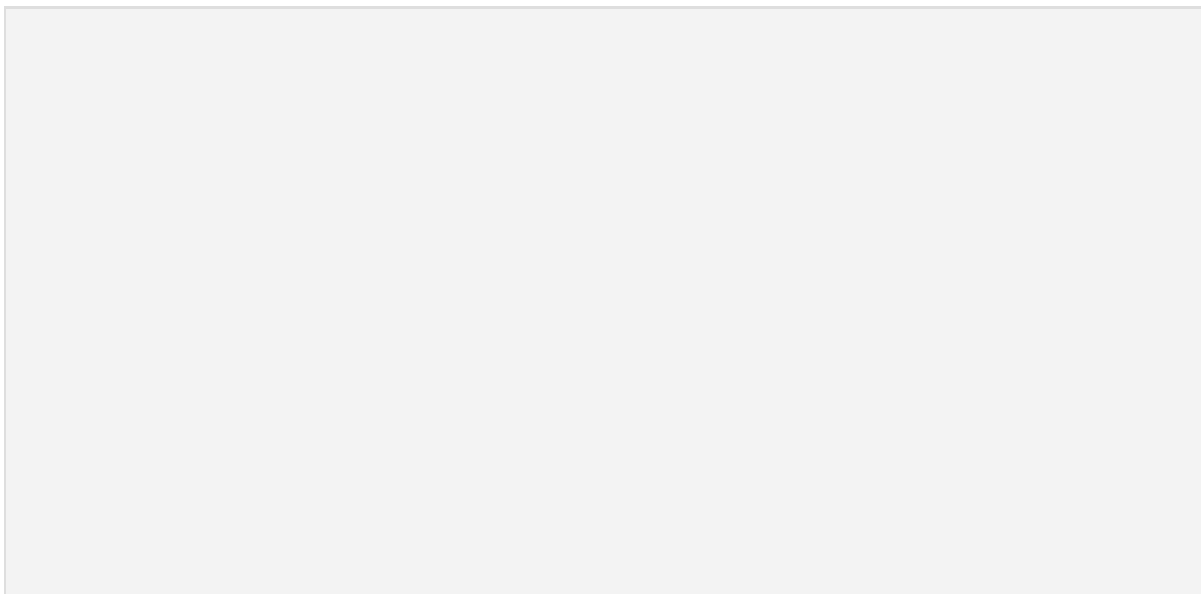




Part of the dining area.

The lobster boil is so popular that they serve up to 40 to 50 lobsters a night during the summer! They have a wood fired pot between the dining room windows and the water's edge so folks can watch one of the staff run back and forth all evening long dropping the lobsters in the boiling water and retrieving them. If Mother Nature doesn't think it's a good idea to be outside, they can do the boils in the kitchen, but the outside boils are extremely popular, as you can imagine.

Unfortunately, we did not get to experience the lobster boil but a sample of the Maine lobster bisque made us realize we need to make plans to do so on our next visit!





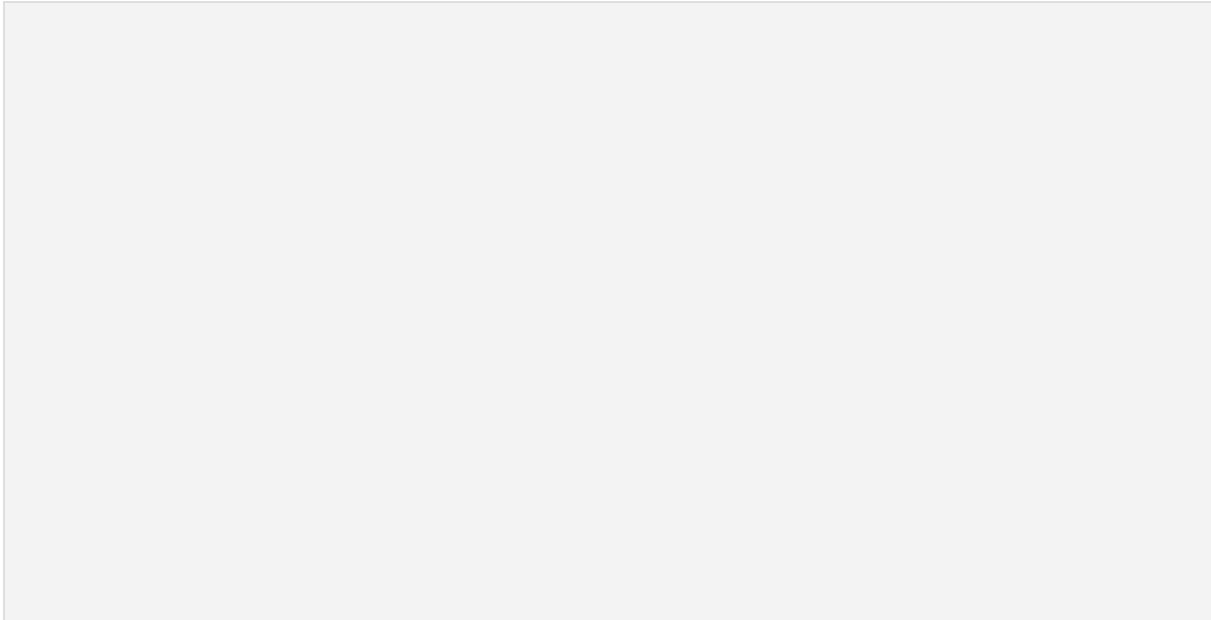
Delicious, creamy Maine lobster bisque

Everything they serve is made from scratch using local ingredients whenever possible, including garden vegetables, the local, famous tart cherries, and other kinds of fruit. They buy local fish from the Hickey Brothers Fishery right in Bailey's Harbor, fly in lobster from Maine, and fish from Hawaii. Their menu changes to fit the seasons and to utilize whatever fresh products are available; however some items are always on the menu.



View from inside.

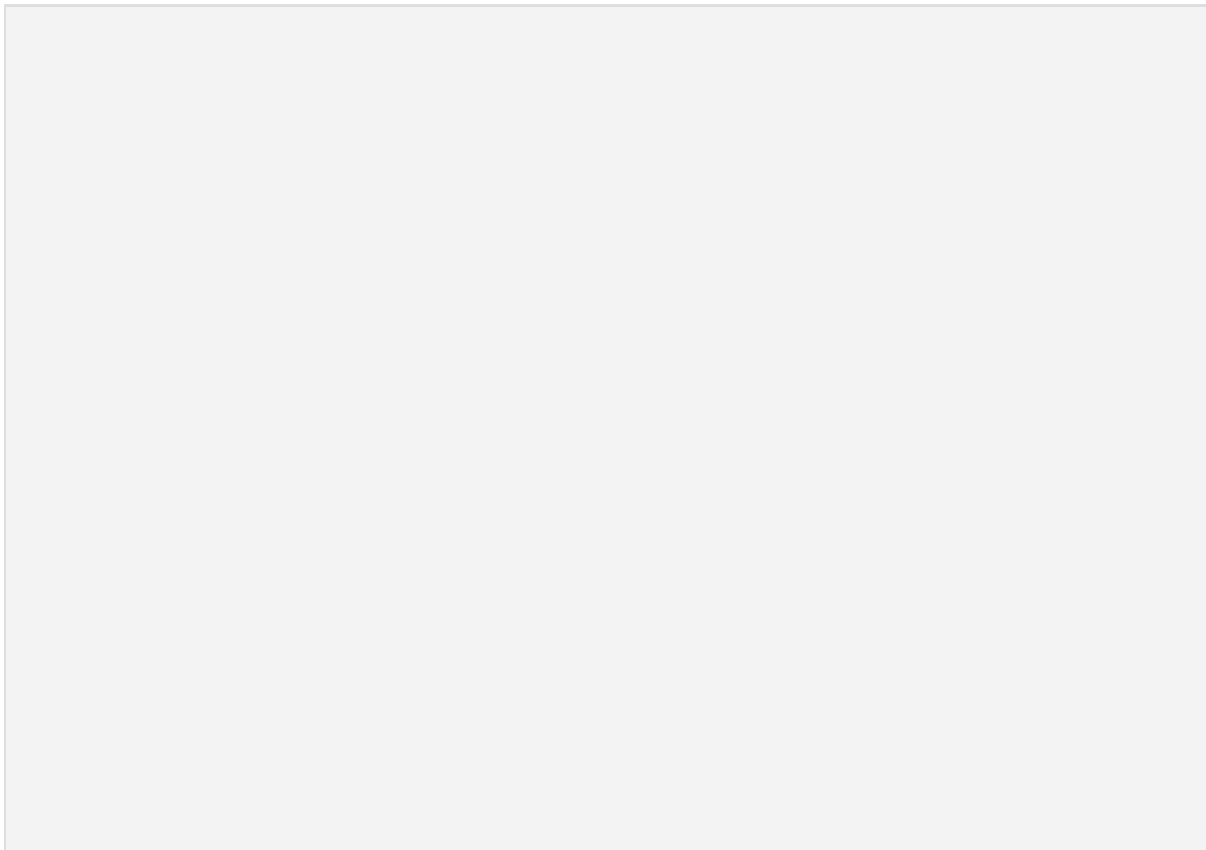
Their popular Harbor Chowder is a whitefish cream chowder, made much the same as New England clam chowder, but they use local whitefish to make it their own special soup. They also serve a to die for Flourless Chocolate Cake, served a little warmer than room temperature, which makes it quite literally melt in your mouth. The most popular entrée during our visit was the Chilean Sea Bass which is lightly dredged in potato and gently fried, then served with a lemon beurre blanc. Guests tell them it is the best sea bass they have ever eaten and we are in agreement after sampling it during our visit.





The amazing Chilean Sea Bass.

Although the restaurant is designated a “seafood place, their meats are also some of the best available and my Filet Mignon was absolutely fabulous.



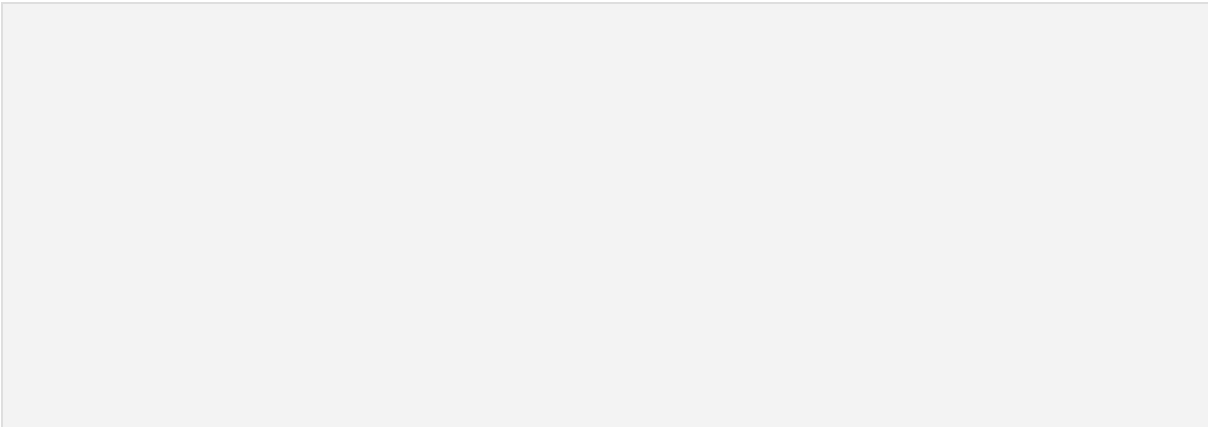


Filet Mignon.

They actually serve breakfast, lunch, and dinner seven days a week, and the breakfast menu contains four different types of eggs benedict which are delicious with their house prepared hollandaise. They even offer a lobster omelet and a lobster benedict. Quiches are made with from scratch crusts with all fresh ingredients, and are some of their guests favorites.

Lunch features include all the usual sandwiches, plus a traditional New England lobster roll. Venders couldn't supply them with the traditional top split buns they wanted so they just make their own bread for the lobster rolls. One of their most popular lunch sandwiches is the Whitefish BLT.

Harbor Fish Market and Grille might seem like a small town restaurant but with their truly gourmet offerings like an escargot in a puff pastry appetizer, along with their delicious and beautifully prepared food, you can be forgiven for thinking you are in a restaurant in a large, metropolitan city.





Escargot in a puff pastry.

But, believe me, you would much rather be in this charming and lovely restaurant in a tiny, quaint town experiencing some of the best service and most delectable food you will ever taste.

Just pop in the next time you are in the area and I'm sure you will agree.

And if you just can't arrange a visit anytime soon, here is their recipe for Door County Cherry Bread Pudding.

DOOR COUNTY CHERRY BREAD PUDDING

Cut one loaf of Texas toast bread (or other heavy bread) into cubes.

In a loaf pan layer bread cubes with other layers of sweetened Door County tart cherries.

Spinkle 1 tsp cinnamon on top

Mix 3 cups half & half with 4 egg yolks, 2 whole eggs, 1 cup sugar & 1 T vanilla. Pour this mixture over bread/cherries mixture and push bread down into pudding. Bake at 350 degrees until done – approximately 45 minutes. We use a convection steam oven here so we are guessing a bit about the timing — so watch carefully. It can be served warm or cool.