

The Four Seasons
99 East 52nd Street (between Park and Lexington Avenue)
New York, NY 10022

Good Seasons

When it comes to great restaurants, New York is an embarrassment of riches. Unfortunately, the average New Yorker cannot afford to eat in the very best restaurants on a regular basis, but once in a while, we all should splurge. My friend Arlene recently celebrated a birthday and wanted to treat herself to something special. She wanted to go to The Four Seasons. I told her I would go with her - she would celebrate her birthday, I would celebrate my book coming out.

We both had not been to The Four Seasons in many years. I am happy to report that little has changed, for it remains one of New York City's culinary treasures. We had lunch in the Pool Room, which is easily one of the most beautiful dining rooms in Manhattan. The service is just terrific. Several servers attend to you, with one main waiter handling everything. Ours was Giuseppe, who has a fabulous shtick. He fawns over the lady and acts disinterested in the man. "Who cares about you?" he says. I am sure some guys with no sense of humor would not be amused at having an Italian Don Rickles waiting on you at a top restaurant, but it's all in good fun. The Four Seasons may be upscale but it's certainly not stuffy.

As you would expect, The Four Seasons is still very expensive, but their \$45.00 three-course prix fixe lunch is a great deal considering what you get and where you're getting it. We both started with corn-chanterelle risotto, which was the best risotto I have ever tasted - rich, creamy, and bursting with freshness from Long Island corn and luxurious chanterelles. I added a little fresh black pepper and some small pieces of crusty bread to enhance what was one of the best meatless dishes I probably have ever had - and that's a lot coming from a carnivore like me. For our entrees, Arlene had the hangar steak, which was juicy, perfectly medium rare, and accompanied by carrots, onion rings, and a flavorful mustard-cafe au lait sauce. I had the fluke, a mild white fish that is pan seared and served with summer vegetables and a carrot-lavender broth - elegant and delicious (although for the ultimate dish, I would have loved to see that beautiful piece of fish perched atop that sinful risotto).

For dessert, Giuseppe's act included letting us order anything we wanted from the regular dessert menu because, well, we were special. Of course, I wanted the assorted cheeses - "No, not that, though," Giuseppe informed me. Okay, fine. Arlene smartly chose the chocolate soufflé while I went with the cherry strudel. Both were winners, but the soufflé was clearly the better dessert, oozing with gooey chocolate decadence. A nice plate of petit fours also comes to the table after the meal (for his final act of chivalry, Giuseppe presented Arlene with a bag of petit fours to take home).

If you are dining alone, I would recommend eating at the bar and partaking of their two-course bar lunch which, for only \$25.00, includes such choices as oysters on the half-shell, shrimp cocktail, risotto with shrimp, and a lobster roll.

The Four Seasons isn't somewhere you eat everyday (and if you do, keep it to yourself), but thankfully it remains one of the great special occasion restaurants in the city.

Click below for more info:
<http://fourseasonsrestaurant.com>

