

Porter House New York
10 Columbus Circle, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10019

Cow Heaven in Columbus Circle

About six years ago, I was in my local supermarket on the Upper East Side. Who do I see in front of me on line? Celebrity chef Michael Lomonaco. I introduced myself and told him I enjoyed his work on TV. He was one of the nicest people I ever met – friendly, charming, and completely down to earth. We talked about the neighborhood, he asked me what I did for a living, and we discussed my book about Gene Wilder, whom he said he was a fan of. Like Larry King, Joan Rivers, and Mario Cuomo, he is a lifelong New Yorker who never let success go to his head. And, of course, I had to get a glimpse of his groceries. Nice to know that this big-time chef buys the same white bread I do – Pepperidge Farm, of course.

With the respect I have for Michael Lomonaco, I really wanted to like his three-year-old restaurant in the Time Warner Center called Porter House New York. I did not like it – I loved it! What a classy, superbly run operation this is. And the waitress informed me that Lomonaco actually shows up at the restaurant everyday, unlike some other celebrity chefs who spend most of their time in front of the TV camera. “Yeah, he’s from Brooklyn, he’s a nice guy,” she said.

When you first enter, you are greeted by inviting big booths opposite the bar area. The main dining room is huge and done in rich chocolate colors. The view of Columbus Circle doesn’t hurt either. The place has a definite power lunch feel, yet it is not at all stuffy.

Ambience is important but it means little if the food cannot match it. Porter House is a real steakhouse with a terrific menu. They do a daily prix fixe lunch that is easily one of the best deals in town. For \$24.00, you get a three-course lunch that consists of generous portions of truly gourmet food. You do not leave Porter House wanting a slice of pizza an hour later.

I had the endive and field greens salad for my starter. It was not impressive. The dressing was okay, but this salad should have been served with gorgonzola and bacon to make it work. My dining companion smartly started with the soup of the day – ginger carrot with a dollop of crème fraiche – a very flavorful soup.

My disappointment with the salad was quickly forgotten when our main course arrived. Rib eye steak frites. Wow! For \$24.00, I expected a few slices of steak and a couple of fries on a big plate. Wrong. The steak was huge, with the perfect amount of fat on it, and cooked to medium rare perfection. I am usually not a fan of fries in most restaurants but these were crispy, nicely salted, and delicious. A handful of watercress is both decorative and tasty. Best of all, I asked for bearnaise sauce on the side. It just does not get much better than this.

I was ready for a nap after finishing my steak, but then dessert arrived. We split a sinfully rich New York cheesecake with a compote of mixed berries and a flourless chocolate torte with whipped cream. The torte was very good but the cheesecake was excellent. We saw some other diners partake of the mango-coconut sorbet, which we made a mental note to try on our next visit. And I sure plan to make many more visits to Porter House, one of my favorite new restaurants run by one of the country's best – and nicest – chefs.

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