

SPECIALTY RESTAURANT REVIEW:

CAGNEY'S STEAKHOUSE ON NORWEGIAN GEM

by

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Cagney's Steakhouse is located high on Norwegian Gem, just below the ship's top suites. This is a choice location for a specialty restaurant as it has excellent views and is far enough removed from the main passenger flow to give it a secluded atmosphere.

The name of the restaurant is an allusion to actor James Cagney who, amongst other things, popularized gangster movies in the 1930s. There are references to the gangster theme in the décor such as door handles shaped like rifles and in some of the paintings that decorate the restaurant. However, this theme is not emphasized and may well go unnoticed. In any event, its theatrical nature should not be taken as an indication that this is a frivolous dining venue.

Overall, the décor of the restaurant is actually

more reminiscent of an upscale New York restaurant of the 1950s or early 1960s. The paintings are abstract and the wood paneled walls are streamlined. Both the port and starboard sides have floor-to-ceiling windows that offer spectacular views of the surroundings. Along the aft wall is an open kitchen where the meals are prepared.

The restaurant also has an extension that is used in the evening. While one cannot see the open kitchen from here, one can see forward out over the ship's main pool area with its colored lights reflecting in the water.

Cagney's is only open to the general passenger body for dinner. However, for guests staying in the ship's top 48 suites, it is also open for breakfast and lunch. These are not to be missed and create a real incentive to book a suite.



For breakfast, Cagney's menu features breakfast specialties such as Belgian waffles, crab cakes benedict, smoked salmon fittata, steak and eggs and pancakes. The Tahitian Vanilla Challah French Toast is delightfully tender, flavorful and not too heavy. Like the other specialties, it is cooked to order and comes to the table fresh.

Alternatively, there is a breakfast buffet with cereals, fruits, muffins, and smoked salmon to name just a few of the items. Of course, guests do not have to choose between the specialties and the buffet; one is free to have some of each.

For lunch, there is another menu offering an appetizer/soup course, a main course and dessert. Cagney's sliders are a specialty. Not surprisingly for a steak house, the strip steak was also consistently good each time I had it. However, perhaps the best dish was the salmon fatoush. The salmon, nestled in a bed of romaine lettuce, cucumber and mint, and served with pita bread, was moist and flavorful. Listed as an appetizer, this item is more than sufficient for a main course.

The evening menu is a straight forward steakhouse menu. It focuses on beef offerings but also has chicken and seafood alternatives. For an additional fee beyond the cover charge, there is a surf and turf of filet mignon and lobster.

Stand out appetizers include the colossal shrimp cocktail; and the jumbo crab cakes. The latter have a nice balance of spices and seafood. The sauce is tasty but perhaps too overpowering, cloaking the subtle flavors of the cake.

The lobster bisque was a heavy rich soup.

Unlike some lobster bisques, there were no chunks of lobster floating in the soup but the flavor was distinctly lobster.

The highpoint of the dinner was the 10 ounce filet mignon. This was cooked exactly as ordered. It was tender, smooth and flavorful.

Cagney's offers four sauces. The filet mignon does not really need a sauce; it can stand on its own. However, the sauces, especially the pepper sauce, are enhancements that bring out the flavor.

Another house specialty is Cagney's fries. - - French fried potatoes cooked with parmesan cheese and white truffle sauce. Also worthy of consideration as a side dish is the garlic mashed potatoes.

These are quite filling meals and thus it is not uncommon for guests to pass on dessert. However, there is a variety of popular dessert offerings including cheesecake and raspberry cr me br lee. A lighter but delicious alternative is the marinated mixed berries. This item is only on the lunch menu but one can ask the server whether there is any left in the kitchen.

The service in Cagney's was excellent. The servers were attentive and on each occasion that I visited, friendly and genuinely interested in whether I was enjoying the meal.

The cover charge for dinner at Cagney's is \$25. Breakfast and lunch are complementary.