

Restaurant Review 28 McCormick and Schmick's March 16, 2015

McCormick and Schmick's: The West County Center seafood restaurant in Des Peres has officially joined Chesterfield's Annie Gunn's on the list as a fine restaurant where people in their right minds will only go for lunch due to the outrageously high prices. So lunch it was for me and my wife, Diana.

I have put off visiting McCormick and Schmick's and Bravo due to the way the shopping center financed building the restaurants. Back in 2007 Lord and Taylor's Department Store on the west of the Mall closed and the shopping center decided to tear it down and build a space for Barnes and Noble Books and several high end restaurants for the rich people in the 63131 zip to unload some of their excess cash at.

The shopping center people got the City of Des Peres to enact a CID (Community/Commercial Improvement District). CID were originally thought up to help fund building of retail businesses in blighted areas...then something went terribly wrong.

Developers in wealthy areas like Chesterfield, Town and Country and Des Peres started using them. The CID is another sales tax layered on shoppers. They eliminate the "risk" portion for developers, who can use shoppers' money to pay for building and maintaining the retail spaces.

However the CID sales tax only was forced on the small merchants. Penny's, Macy's and Nordstrom's own their buildings and were exempt for the CID tax. When the tax started the J. Buck Restaurant was charging customers the CID tax which was being used to bring in competition. J. Bucks went out of business shortly after the tax and the construction started.



Another important reason why McCormick and Schmick's should be considered for lunch is that there are no parking spaces on the lot in front of the building from noon to 1:30 or in the evening. There are spaces, but good luck finding an empty one. Of course there is valet parking available because if you can afford to eat here you can afford to pay someone to park your car.

At 2 o'clock on a Monday afternoon the place was almost empty. There was none of the lunch regulars hanging around for extra drinks at 2:15 on the day we were there.



Starters: My wife began with a green salad with blue cheese and a vinaigrette (\$7.99). She liked it saying it was very fresh and was not smothered in dressing. The lettuce in salads my wife likes look like weeds to me so I have to depend on her opinion.



I went with the cup of Clam Chowder. (\$5.99 for a cup \$7.25 for a bowl.) It was very good. Diana thought it was a bit too salty. I thought it had some interesting seasonings and a rich broth. It was good. However, I have had better clam chowder recently sitting in a family restaurant in Oregon on a picnic table, at the dock in Monterey, California, 40 miles south of Newport, Rhode Island at an outdoor seafood shack, in Maine and in Newfoundland. It may have cost me to get to these places but they were charging about half as much for the clam chowder as was McCormick and Schmicks.



The Maine Lobster Bisque is probably very good, but I'll never know. They wanted \$13.25 for it.

On the day we had our late lunch at an empty restaurant they had a special on stuffed mushrooms at \$1 each. Diana ordered one and was sorry she did not order four and called it lunch for \$4. I could not tell you if it was any good, as I don't eat mushrooms, since they are a fungus, the same as athlete's foot. Diana raved about the flavor.



Lunch: Diana went with a cod and fried shrimp special that was not on the menu. The shrimp was okay. However, perhaps the highlight of the day was the Shaffely Beer battered cod (which is Boulevard Beer battered cod in Kansas City). This was the best portion of Fish and Chips I have ever tasted...including at pubs in England. This is the reason you should go to McCormick and Schmicks...for the cod fish sandwich (\$11.25) or the fish and chips (\$15.95). It is overpriced especially since the French fries and cole slaw were not memorable, but the cod is great.



I went with the grill trout, with green beans and mashed potatoes (\$17.99). I unfortunately allowed our young waiter to move me up by adding lobster bits and sauce

to the potatoes. As a side the lobster mashed potatoes cost 11.99. As an add-on to my entrée it was an extra \$6.99. The trout was excellent, grilled perfectly. The green beans however were a disappointment as they were bland. But a butter sauce that came with the trout was excellent and added some flavor to the beans. The upgrade to the Lobster potatoes was a mistake. There was zero taste of the potatoes, everything tasted like the lobster sauce. The lumps of lobster were not generous, however the amount of spuds was and I took half of the order home.



We did split a Crème Brûlée (\$6.99). It was good. I already took a bite before I remembered I needed to take a photo.