



## Outstanding New York Neighborhood Restaurant in the NY Helmsley Hotel – Not to be Missed

July 9, 2010 by [Linda](#)

**“This is our home – our hotel, we take care of it,” is the Helmsley mantra and true in every sense of the word.**



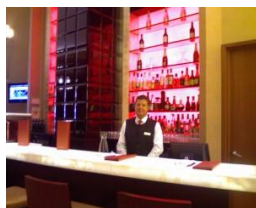
'Wicked' is not a restaurant reviewer, but occasionally we discover a restaurant so remarkable, we would be remiss not to share it with our readers. Leona's at the Helmsley Hotel is such a discovery. During our recent stay at the New York Helmsley, we were invited to dine in their newly renovated restaurant and bar – **Leona's**. Say what you want about Leona Helmsley, she understood outstanding service. I have stayed at the New York Helmsley numerous times and every time the service has been consistently outstanding. This trip was no exception from check in to check out the service was impeccable. **Leona's restaurant was outstanding – a not to be missed experience and well worth writing about.**

### An Intimate Dining Experience

One year ago, there was a decision to renovate the hotel restaurant and the famous Harry's bar. Executive Chef Brian Wiener, was brought in to oversee the renovations and revitalize the culinary program. The décor, which was designed by J. Brice of Boston, is very dramatic, art deco and modern. Once inside, you lose all sense of being in a hotel. The lighting, the furniture and the comfortable chairs give you the 5 star feeling without the 5 star price and attitude.



Before our meal, we sat down with Brian for an in-depth interview. I kept feeling I had met Brian before, but just shrugged it off. We posed the usual questions asking about Brian's background and then everything clicked. Brian was the head chef at the Tarrytown House Estates where my daughter was married two years ago. The wedding was amazing and people still talk about the wonderful food. I finally had the chance to personally thank him for an extraordinary day and was dying to sample his cuisine again. You could hear his appreciation of food in his description of dishes and how thoughtfully he fused the flavors. Combination's which ordinarily seemed conflicting created an extraordinary sensation. (i.e. the appetizer of Diver Sea Scallop atop a sweet potato puree with a drizzle of white chocolate sauce on top – sensational!)



**So what makes Leona's so special?** First, the atmosphere, then the food, but even more importantly Brian is trying to make Leona's a neighborhood restaurant by keeping prices exceptionally affordable. We all know New York has no

shortage of restaurants, so how can a hotel restaurant become a neighborhood favorite. Here are some answers:

- The restaurant is an intimate and memorable dining experience
- Service is perfection – you are treated as an honored guest in their restaurant. “Welcome, we’ll take good care of you tonight”.
- Numerous events are planned throughout the year such as wine and beer pairings with special menus to compliment the selections
- An offering of unique dishes that blend and fuse flavors from America, Mediterranean and Asian influences. Dishes are slightly rustic and use a bounty of local fresh ingredients.
- Perhaps the best Crab Cake in America – don’t even THINK of challenging them Baltimore!

Before we left I asked Brain what his mom thought about his food, and his answer made me smile, “Well, she tells me I can cook, and she likes my cooking”. That was enough for me, mothers do know best.

Susan and I were anticipating our dining experience, and it topped all our expectations. Since I had stayed at the Helmsley many times, an old friend Nagi, who remembered me as well, greeted us. After asking our preferences, Nagi helped choose our meal which was perfect in every way. Beginning with the



Scallops and Crab Cake appetizer, we knew immediately we were in for an extraordinary dining experience. Speechless was what we were! Each bite delivered flavors new to both of us. The white chocolate drizzle on the scallops and the sweet potatoes delivered a combination of tantalizing sweet and salty. Our main courses were equally spectacular, Susan had Lamb in a rosemary jus, and I had a Sea Bass with blended citrus and herbs – each bite exploded with flavor.

Lon, the evening Chef, checked in on us and explained the cheese selection he was sending out. We also took the opportunity to ask about the fabulous Crab Cake. His secret? “No filler” – all crab in a crunchy crumb crust. It was clear how passionate both he and Brian are about making Leona’s a very special place by providing consistency and excellence in both food and service. The menu changes with the seasons, and their special events will keep diners returning.



Since I do not eat meat, restaurants rarely get me excited, but Leona’s is truly different. If Leona’s were in Boston, I would eat there regularly, but since it is not I will have to find reasons to return to New York more often. **We know restaurant choices are endless in New York, but between the menu and the spectacular service, Leona’s should not be missed whether you are staying at the Helmsley Hotel or not.** In addition, for all you New Yorkers, check out the menu and events, <http://www.newyorkhelmsley.com/restaurant-new-york-hotels.asp>. Who knows maybe we will meet at Leona’s Oktoberfest Event. And please say hello to Nagi for me.