

Pining for Arowhon

Recently, I had the opportunity to return to one of my all-time favourite restaurants, Arowhon Pines in Algonquin Park.

Arowhon Pines is more than just a restaurant — it's an idyllic resort on the shores of unspoiled Little Joe Lake. Owing to its off-the-beaten path location, most diners are also staying at the resort, but non-residents are more than welcome to come for meals.

Arowhon Pines is so special and uniquely Canadian that a visit should be a compulsory part of the agenda for all foreign visitors.

Arowhon starts with a location that's tough to beat. A private road winds eight kilometres off the highway to this secluded, lakefront locale. In the summer, the scenery's pretty fine, but in the fall, it's absolutely breathtaking. Wildlife sightings including loons, deer and moose are almost routine, and you can pass many a lazy hour on the wide porch of the main lodge reading and looking over the lake.

All meals are served in the oft-photographed main lodge, a red-roofed, six-sided structure made from hand-hewn logs. Inside, a massive stone fireplace dominates the centre of the room and provides an atmosphere of rustic elegance, while every window offers a million-dollar view of the lake or the woods.

DINING OUT

Anne Marie Males

The food is so good and so plentiful that pacing oneself becomes the real challenge. (I must confess that I have enthusiastically endorsed a four-hour hike between lunch and dinner — not to enjoy the scenery, but to help work up an appetite for the meal to come.)

Lunches (\$32 for non residents) are almost as grand as the dinners. These start with buffet-style appetizers, which usually include a selection of salads and juices. There's usually a soup, then a choice

of three entrees. One of the days I visited, the lunch menu included herbed seafood crepes, vegetable quiche with waldorf salad or grilled provimi liver with oven-baked caramelized onions and potato and leek gratin. As a return visitor, I'd been hoping for the seafood crepes. Stuffed with salmon, shrimp and other delicacies, seasoned with fresh dill and topped with a butter-based sauce, the seafood crepes achieve the seemingly impossible feat of being light and unbelievably rich at the same time.

Diners do not have to limit themselves to one entree. Servers are more than happy to bring seconds or let you

try something else, or, you can order half portions of more than one.

On this occasion I stuck to one entree so I could leave room for dessert where I had a choice of warm apple pie with five-year-old cheddar cheese, chocolate mousse, house-made velvet ice cream or seasonal fresh fruit. The ice cream is always a safe bet; made on site, it is so wonderfully fresh you may never be able to stomach the super-market variety again. But this time I go for the apple pie. Rustic in appearance, the crust is still light, and the filling has a rich, caramel flavour to it. Topped with white cheddar, this may well be the

best apple pie I've ever had.

Like lunch, dinner opens with a buffet-style appetizer table, but this one is rich and varied enough to be a meal in itself. One evening we visited the table included smoked trout and cucumber on pumpernickel, house pate (not to be missed!) with chutney, multi-bean salad, chicken breast with blueberry vinaigrette, tabouleh, and smelts parmesan with cocktail sauce.

The soup was a delicious leek and potato, followed by a selection of mains that included tarragon-scented grilled rainbow trout, roast prime rib of beef with all the trimmings, and parsley-



"Oh damn! There goes my napkin ring."

breaded pork schnitzel. I was tempted by the schnitzel, but I knew I couldn't pass up Arowhon's wonderful Yorkshire pudding.

The grand finale is dessert served on a long pine table, which includes an overwhelming selection of pies, cakes, squares, cookies, cheese, fruit and ice cream.

Because Arowhon is located inside Algonquin Provincial Park it's unlicensed, but diners are welcome to bring their own wine (no corkage fee). I can't imagine how disappointing it would be to find this out after the fact because these are meals that deserve fine wine.

Alas, Arowhon is a seasonal resort only, and closes this year on Oct. 8. If you get a chance to visit before then, take it.

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Arowhon Pines

Arowhon Rd., 8 km north of Hwy. 60 in Algonquin Provincial Park
705-633-5661
arowhonpines.com

Dress: Casual
Specialty of the house:
Fresh food, local ingredients
Prix fixe dinner: \$70
Unlicensed,
but you may BYOB