

Editor's Choice Winner
Best-Kept Secret
Lake Magazine 2004

The Restaurant at the Belvedere Inn Saugatuck

Of course Peter Ta greeted us at the door when we arrived to start the weekend, helped us with our bags, showed us around the fabulous turn-of-the-century mansion and then said hopefully and charmingly, "Will you be joining us for dinner?" There are really two dining rooms, both with windows overlooking the garden, grand mahogany tables and chairs and one with a fireplace. He added that Friday was an excellent night to eat at the Belvedere because it was less busy than Saturday. (On Fridays there tend to be 40-50 guests for dinner; on Saturdays 70-80 during the evening.) Then Pete showed us where to put our wine if it needed to breathe or chill. (What, no 150% restaurant markup on wine?) Then the menu with items like: chicken liver and Irish Whiskey pate with green peppercorns, grain mustard, gherkins, pickled onions and marinated olives – one of the specialties of Irish-born and trained Chef Shaun Glynn – Chateaubraind for Two, cut form the head of the filet served with pan jus and a classically-formed Bearnaise, another specialty; also sautéed Provini calves liver with Vidalia onion, served with horseradish potatoes and Madeira sauce; New Zealand rack of lamb with rosemary polenta in red wine sauce; a "pre-fix" dinner including a classic Caesar salad, filet mignon or pecan-encrusted catfish; the possibility of chocolate cheesecake with an Oreo cookie base, profiteroles, a selection of chesses to share; it just goes on an on (Everything we sampled was artfully prepared and went beyond the expectations wrought from the description.)

Very quickly into the meal, we realized our amazing luck. Excellent service, incomparable quality food preparation and very economical, we had stumbled unexpectedly onto a top-notch restaurant. Who knew? Well, the residents of Saugatuck know. By 8 pm there were a few Belvedere guests, but the dining room was quickly filling up with parties who live in homes nearby, with their own wine. We got the hint and returned Saturday as well.

The restaurant at the Inn is open Wed-Sun, 5-9 pm and on Fri-Sat until 10 pm, www.thebelvedereinn.com.