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# Inn of the Seasons in Onondaga does everything well (Dining Out Review)




By **Jane Marmaduke** | **Contributing writer**

[Email the author](#)

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Commonly, places that call themselves "family restaurants" do not offer dishes worthy of the label "fine dining." However, the [Inn of the Seasons](#), high on a hill near Onondaga Community College, is not a common restaurant.

The restaurant is housed in a beautiful old Colonial listed on the National Register of Historical Buildings. The two dining rooms are comfortable and pretty. Service is as unusually good as the comfortable seating, and the regularly updated website shows nightly specials and desserts as well as the seasonal menu and wine lists.

All these elements add to the impression of a truly guest-centric attitude on the part of owners Brad Wiese (also head chef) and Carole arino-Wiese (front end manager and highly skilled pastry chef).

Among the wine lists is a special one headed "27 Years-27 Bottles-27 Dollars." From the 27, we chose a Chateau Briot Bordeaux 2011 from France, a dry, dark red wine. It was an excellent wine for the price, drinkable right out of the bottle, with heavy tannins but a smooth finish.

Other wine lists include glasses from \$6 to \$9, with bottles from \$24.95 to \$105.95 as well as half bottles of sparkling wines.

Appetizers on the menu range from French Onion Soup for \$5.50 to Crab Cakes for \$10.50. The two we chose, Honey-Rum Dijon Shrimp (\$9.95) and Baked Brie (\$8.50), were elegant in both presentation and perfect preparation. They were the best appetizers we'd enjoyed in a restaurant in recent memory.

Our three jumbo shrimp were perfectly cooked and presented in a sauce in which the brightest note was Dijon mustard, well balanced with the other elements. The preparation of our baked Brie was equally skillful, the pastry wrapping a light golden brown and the Brie within melted so that, on being cut, the pastry released melted cheese into the delicious port sauce. We were happy to have warm toasted cheese bread for all those delicious sauces.

Regular main courses run from a \$17.50 Manicotti and Ravioli dinner to a \$31.95 Strip Steak. Our choices were the Sliced Tenderloin with Bearnaise and Bordelaise (\$30.95) and the Jersey Pork Chops (\$17.95).

All dinners come with the aforementioned bread and a salad, a fresh, pretty blend of well dried spring mix complemented by red onion, grated carrot and a halved cherry tomato. Our salads were dressed lightly with vinaigrette and topped with crumbled blue cheese. The vinaigrette was notable for the absence of any harshness.

## German Chocolate Cake with Coconut-Pecan Filling and Chocolate Sour

We were impressed with the Inn of the Seasons well before our mains arrived, but we were about to have our first impressions confirmed deliciously.

## Cream Frosting was even more impressive.

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Our Jersey Pork Chops were two large chops on the bone, cooked until just done. They were remarkably tender, with just a touch of char from the grill to add flavor. The accompaniments-baby carrots in a light butter sauce, julienned zucchini touched by tarragon, and potatoes au gratin-created a beautiful balance with the savory chops.

The same sides enhanced our Sliced Tenderloin and worked just as well there. The tenderloin was excellent: as tender as we could wish and perfectly cooked to a pink center surrounded by enough char on the outside to add depth of flavor. This beef could stand on its own, but the sauces were also wonderful. While one of us would happily drink bearnaise with a straw, the bordelaise was equally delicious. That the two sauces were distinct on the plate but melded well when eaten was yet another impressive accomplishment from the kitchen.

A wide range of desserts, each at \$5.50, is offered at The Inn of the Seasons, all created by the same person who made us feel as welcome as regulars: co-owner Carole Marino-Wiese.

Our Chocolate Truffle Cake with Chambord and Vanilla Sauces was indeed truffle-like. This was a very dense chocolate with a coating of slightly more brittle chocolate. The Chambord formed a pretty pattern in the frothy vanilla sauce on the plate. Every element of this dessert was delicious.

However, the German Chocolate Cake with Coconut-Pecan Filling and Chocolate Sour Cream Frosting was even more impressive. The cake layers were incredibly light, the nutty, coconut-y filling balancing their softness and texture beautifully. The sour cream in the frosting prevented it from being too sweet. This was a remarkable German chocolate cake.

In fact, much about the Inn of the Seasons is remarkable. The people are genuinely happy to see diners, whether they are long-time customers or new ones like us. Details like the table settings, with formal Syracuse China and fine wine glasses, match the quality the kitchen delivers. Service is professional, friendly and happy. A strong, casual welcome in a place that creates such excellent food makes this one of our new favorites.

### The Details

**The Restaurant:** The Inn of the Seasons, 4311 West Seneca Turnpike. [315-492-4001](tel:315-492-4001).

**Credit Cards?** Yes

**Vegetarian Options Available?** Yes

**Access to Disabled?** Limited. A portable ramp for wheelchairs is available for building access, but restrooms are not wheelchair-accessible.

**Hours:** Tuesday-Thursday 4-10, Friday and Saturday 4-11, Sunday noon to 8.

**Cost:** Mains on the menu range from \$17.50 to \$31.95. For our review, we ordered from across the menu, and the total for two including appetizers, mains, desserts and wine, with tax and a 20 percent tip was \$136.77.



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