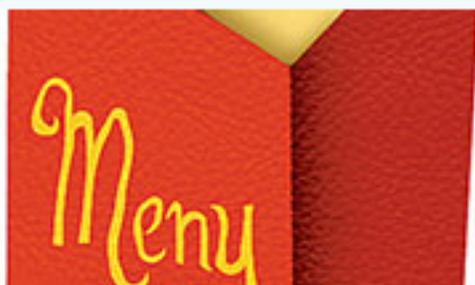


Phil Vettel



January 20, 2011

More than any other single restaurant category, steakhouses sell service. Steakhouse regulars like to be recognized and love to be pampered, and Chicago Cut does those things as well as any restaurant in town. Every time I visited, staffers did something out of the ordinary to make a guest feel honored, including tailoring drink orders.

Chicago Cut's steaks are prime, dry-aged on the premises for 35 to 40 days (except for the filet, which is wet-aged) and fantastic. The strip steak au poivre was one of the best I've had, and the bone-in filet was the best, period. The rib-eye was perhaps a little fattier than it needed to be, but the Colorado lamb chops were meaty, juicy and richly flavored.

Outstanding side dishes include the truffled scalloped potatoes, inlaid with Swiss chard and diced pork belly, and the creamed spinach, which might be the finest version Chicago has to offer.

Appetizers include a pretty tuna tartare, mixed with avocado slices into an attractive cylinder. My quibble here is that it's served too cold, so that the initial bites are nearly flavorless. (After about 10 minutes, the dish opened up nicely.)

Desserts include a very good, three-story carrot cake, but my pick would be for the first-rate Key lime pie.

The wine list is presented on iPads, a glitzy touch that must have cost the owners a fortune. Patrons can fingertip-scroll their way through the extensive selection or custom-search by variety, region and/or price, aided by color photographs of the wine bottles. Push a button, and you've ordered.

Chicago Cut offers white-tablecloth breakfast service as a way to lure corporate business, and that translates into a nice upscale brunch on weekends. Chicago Cut is easy to love now, but come summertime, when the patio overlooking the Chicago River offers al fresco dining, there will be no stopping this place.

★★★ Chicago Cut Steakhouse, 300 N. LaSalle St., 312-329-1800. Breakfast, lunch and dinner Monday-Sunday.