

Indulging yourself at Brunch

BY KATHRYN MCALEE

There isn't a better way to start a Sunday than with the wonderful buffet brunch at the Laurel Point Inn. Take brunch in the Terrace Room, overlooking the ocean, with floatplanes in the air and the Coho heading out of the harbour. Their Sunday buffet is constantly replenished with fresh, hot cuisine, such as fruit-stuffed French toast, traditional Eggs Benedict (or the West Coast version with salmon instead of ham) and the waffles with sundried blueberries and all the accompaniments such as sausage, bacon and hashbrowns.

Next there is Caesar salad, spinach salad, or (as there was on the Sunday when my friends and I enjoyed a leisurely brunch) a delightful baby bocconcini mozzarella and tomato salad.

Enjoy an incredible spread of seafood, including smoked tuna, smoked salmon, oysters, mussels and more. Cheeses, including local Salt Spring Island cheese, are featured plus hot items such as squash cannelloni, vegetables and stuffed sole or chicken breast with cranberries and bric... in smaller portions so you can try it all. A carving station is part of the buffet, too!

A trio played and the comfortably elegant, casual, West Coast feeling was bright and cheerful. You will definitely need a walk on the harbour if you sample as much as I did at the buffet, especially if you indulge in the beautiful desserts and the irresistible fruit. What a bounty of delicious cuisine!

Down the street at the Hotel Grand Pacific you will find brunch à la carte or buffet-style. Better yet, try the authentic Dim Sum at the Pacific Restaurant, made by Hong Kong-trained executive chef Rick Choy. The service is what you might receive in a fine dining room in



The Laurel Point Inn's buffet brunch features stellar views of Victoria's Inner Harbour.

Hong Kong and not the typical bamboo strainer service that often goes with Dim Sum.

Across the water at the Delta Ocean Pointe Hotel and Spa, Lure has delicious

French toast and a wonderful view as well. The French toast is made with three slices of sundried cranberry and pecan baguette (baked for Lure by Rising Star Bakery) and is smothered in a rich

Bananas Foster sauce laced with slices of banana, rum and raisins.

A warm strawberry-and-rhubarb French toast cobbler is made with Grand Marnier. Scrumptious!

Even Nautical Nellies Steak and Seafood House on Wharf Street has started an à la carte Sunday brunch, beginning at 10 a.m., with pancakes, "bennies" and steak and eggs. And there's more... Vista 18 at the Chateau Victoria offers an à la carte brunch both Saturday and Sunday from 11:30 a.m.

A favourite for Sunday brunch, all day long, is Willie's Bakery on Lower Johnson (aka Lojo). The original Willie's Bakery was built in 1887 and has had four generations of the Willie family baking over the years. It was reopened as Willie's in 1999 and, more recently, Doug King has taken it to new heights. I began my brunch with a London Fog Earl Grey tea with steamed milk and a shot of vanilla. The day's special pecan-and-pumpkin French toast was mouth-wateringly delicious, as was the Willie's Eggs Benedict on brioche toast with cold smoked wild salmon and arugula.

Molé seems to draw me in every time I travel down Pandora Avenue. It's become habit. (Oh no, that's Habit the coffee house next door!) Molé's funky atmosphere and warm hugs every time I stop in keep me coming back for more! (Ask for a hug. I'm not kidding. Someone is bound to oblige.) Molé's breakfast menu is served daily, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., offering something for everyone. Huevos Rancheros is the local favourite with house-made corn tortillas, spicy house-made organic beans, goat feta, their own organic salsa plus avocado and sour cream. I love the Molé Benny served on a buttermilk biscuit with smoked paprika béchamel and thyme roasted tomato. Spelt flour and banana griddle cakes served with fruit, whipped

cream and 100 per cent pure organic maple syrup are also a fabulously decadent treat.

Obviously Sunday in downtown Victoria is Brunch Day. You just need a month of Sundays to enjoy it all.

Kathryn McAree is the owner of the Island's premier culinary tour company, Travel With Taste. Eating and drinking for a living has its advantages; Sunday brunch around town is certainly one of the privileges of living in such a first-rate culinary destination. Kathy's Saturday culinary walking tours will begin again in May. Visit www.travelwithtaste.com to join An Urban Forage by Foot and taste your way through downtown.

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