

Maine isn't all lobsters and blueberries

Eating our way across mid-coast Maine



Our first evening meal was at the Damariscotta River Grill which has as original and appealing a menu as any in New England. Above are the potato Latkes and Lobster Risotto. Patricia Brooks photos.

Damariscotta River Grill

My wife has near-mystic abilities for finding the most unlikely culinary delights no matter where we travel, but I thought mid-coast Maine might be her Waterloo.

I was wrong again.

On our first evening we dined at the Damariscotta River Grill (www.damariscottarivergrill.com) in the middle of the charming one-block-long village of Damariscotta, a hundred yards off Route 1.

This town is drop-dead beautiful, and the Maine Coast Bookstore across from the restaurant is worth a detour all by itself, with its charming wi-fi'd cafe, great coffee and nosh. The towns of Damariscotta and Newcastle are linked by the Main Street bridge over the Damariscotta River, forming the "Twin Villages". The name Damariscotta is an Indian name meaning "river of little fish". The town is picture-postcard-perfect Maine.

The Grill is owned operated by husband-and-wife team Rick Hirsch (Executive Chef) and Jean Kerrigan (General Manager) who also run the Anchor Inn Restaurant (www.anchorinnrestaurant.com) on the harbor in Round Pond. It's a fifteen-minute drive south and an excellent restaurant, but the Grill is about as upscale as you get.

A quick glance at the menu (<http://tinyurl.com/147dww>) reveals unexpected delights like Latkes, which are shredded potatoes, seasoned, pan fried and topped with a marvelous house-made apple chutney and sour cream, *Oy Vay*, (\$6.20), and Lobster Risotto grilled vegetable and fontina cheese risotto, topped with fresh sautéed Maine lobster, worth every penny of the \$24 price.

Two other unusual and delightful entrées we tried were the Steak & Cakes (Earthy & Tender); four-ounce tenderloin, covered with roasted garlic tarragon aioli and our fan favorite lobster cakes (\$24); and Thai Fish Stew (Exotic & Zesty) in a coconut red curry broth loaded with fish, shrimp, scallops and mussels, with pad Thai noodles (\$19.88).