

# The NOW

## **Dine in style at Titanic-themed dinner parties; [Final Edition]**

*Margaret Deefholts. Coquitlam Now. New Westminster, B.C.: Jul 18, 2007. pg. 25*

"Dinner parties rank first among all entertainments, and they are a great source of elevation and education."

-- 1903 Edwardian era handbook entitled Correct Social Usage

Along with a group of fellow travellers, I'm in the splendid dining room at Victoria's Fairmont Empress Hotel.

As part of the Royal B.C. Museum's Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition, the Fairmont -- along with several other Victoria hotels and restaurants -- is offering themed Titanic packages and Edwardian culinary feasts.

So, just as those first-class passengers did on that fateful night of April 14, 1912, we are supping on consomme Olga, (finely sliced leeks, carrots, celery and shallots simmered in veal stock) accompanied by a Cedar Creek pinot noir.

One of the main courses served on that unforgettable night was a filet mignon lili. Our waiter sets this before us tonight. Served in a sauce of cognac, madeira and red wine, seasoned with rosemary, tomato paste and bay leaf, the melt-in-your-mouth filet is garnished with medallions of fois gras, artichoke hearts and truffles.

As the rich and famous did then, we finish our meal with a Waldorf pudding, a crescent of creme brulee delicately garnished with slivered apple and walnuts. I have to admit it, this is truly a meal to die for.

Worth living for, however, is a stay at Abigail's Hotel, where the only thing I "sink" into is a luxurious double bed. Located on a quiet cul-de-sac only minutes away from the museum, Abigail's is one of Victoria's prettiest bed and breakfast boutique hotels.

I am treated each evening to a selection of delectable hors d'oeuvres reflective of the ship's first-class dining room, paired with a special Titanic-era aperitif.

As I mix and mingle with other guests in the library, everyone seems to have a tale or two to swap about friends or relatives in some way connected to the doomed ship.

At the Hotel Grand Pacific, the group and I are introduced to an epicurean menu at The Mark, which would have impressed even the most discerning of palates on the Titanic.

On offer is a six-course seafood spread (paired with appropriate wines) which, no doubt, would take as many hours to consume.

I opt instead for a more manageable a la carte menu (which also boasts a bewildering choice of entrees) and feast on the Titanic- inspired slow roasted duck breast with bubble brioche and foie gras accompanied by French 75 (gin, lemon juice, sugar and champagne).

I stagger heavily to my feet at the end of our banquet, feeling like a very Sinkable Margaret (Molly) Deefholts.

If I were a first-class passenger on the Titanic I'd be so replete that I don't know whether I'd be capable of summoning the energy to board a lifeboat.

Paul Hadfield, owner of **Spinnakers** Gastro Brewpub, mourned the loss of thousands of bottles of beer and wine from the ship's hold, and decided to do something about it.

We are invited to an opening ceremony where he and John Zaller, creative director for the museum's Titanic exhibition, open a large crate. To the popping of flashbulbs, Hadfield triumphantly displays three new craft beers: The Titanic, a dark imperial stout; Iceberg, a pale ale as translucent as a shard of ice; and finally a robust roasted malt ale, The Unsinkable Molly Brown.

"Bottoms up folks!" Hadfield says with a laugh.

And how about Titanic's third-class passengers? What were their meals like? Apparently they, too, dined quite well.

They were served on White Star china with the shipping line's distinctive emblem -- look out for the crockery when going through the interactive galleries at the Royal Museum -- and the food was so appetizing that one passenger thought he was being offered first- class cuisine in error.

To honour the Titanic's origins in Belfast shipyards, and to showcase the fare offered to second- and third-class passengers, Victoria's rollicking Irish Times Pub is serving up a hearty three- course meal.

Quaffing ale in true pub fashion, we square our elbows to demolish a sturdy South Hampton pot pie (halibut, wild salmon, spinach, leeks and creamy potatoes encased in pastry). My companions in gastronomic excess choose the Belfast coddle, a no-nonsense stew of braised lamb, pork sausages, carrots, potatoes and dumplings.

The Titanic-inspired dessert is a gingerbread and Bass Ale cake afloat in apple cider and topped with whipped cream -- all of it as full-bodied as I now look.

Returning home to Tsawwassen on B.C. Ferries, my ship wallows through a very dark and stormy night. I'm glad there are no icebergs around.

IF YOU GO:

- For detailed information on Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition, visit [www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/titanic/default.aspx](http://www.royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/titanic/default.aspx).

- For information on Titanic-themed packages, culinary delights and tours, visit Abigail's Hotel ([www.abigailshotel.com/specials.html](http://www.abigailshotel.com/specials.html)), Hotel Grand Pacific ([www.hotelgrandpacific.com/index.html](http://www.hotelgrandpacific.com/index.html)), The Fairmont Empress ([www.fairmont.com/Empress](http://www.fairmont.com/Empress)), The Irish Times Pub ([www.irishtimespub.ca](http://www.irishtimespub.ca)), Magnolia Hotel & Spa ([www.magnoliahotel.com/packages.html](http://www.magnoliahotel.com/packages.html)), **Spinnakers** Gastro Brew Pub & Guesthouses ([www.spinnakers.com/specials/default.aspx#1](http://www.spinnakers.com/specials/default.aspx#1)).