



Cheers to 2020

For most of us, this year marks a “once in a lifetime.” After all, it is only every 101 years that a “double” comes along. My grandparents were babies when the last one arrived in 1919...perhaps just old enough to bang on a pot or pan. It is rare for us, as well as restaurants, to encounter these “doubles.” How many dining establishments can you name (without asking Siri!) that have served patrons for over a century?

One such restaurant that comes to mind is Philadelphia’s City Tavern, which opened in 1773 and continues to offer 18th century cuisine. You may also be familiar with our own Mike Kelly’s Wilmington institution, Kelly’s Logan House. “The Logan House” started serving trolley travelers over a century and a half ago and remains a Trolley Square staple.

My favorite restaurant that has stood the test of time — that is, over a century — is The Grand Central Oyster Bar & Restaurant in New York City’s Grand Central Terminal. The Oyster Bar was just a tot at the last “double,” having opened its doors in February 1913. The Oyster Bar was the destination of elegant travelers, high society, and dignitaries, including two Chief Justices (a bottle of bubbly goes to the first who can name them!)

By the early 70s, the days of long distance train travel had waned. The Oyster Bar was bankrupt and in need of reimagining. Jerome Brody, famed restaurateur, came to the rescue, transforming The Oyster Bar into a dining destination, not simply a stopover for train travelers. The 440 seat establishment is a designated NYC landmark and serves some of the freshest seafood around. Between two and three dozen oyster varieties, from Tomales Bay, California, to Malagash, Nova Scotia, are showcased on the menu every day.

Also of note are the charming red and white checked tablecloths and the architecture. The vaulted arches by Rafael Guastavino are a marvel worth visiting. Try sending a message to your travel companion along the vaulted arches in the “Whispering Gallery.”

Here, I share two recipes from *The Grand Central Oyster Bar & Restaurant Cookbook* by Sandy Ingber and Roy Finamor. These quick dishes are perfect for a 2020 celebratory meal. Wishing you good health and good food in 2020. Happy New Year! Happy New Year! 🍷



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CAVIAR SANDWICH *Serves 6*

This simple and delicious sandwich was one of Mr. Brody’s favorite dishes. It all relies on the quality of the caviar. We use American black bowfin caviar, which comes from an ancient fish that Cajuns call choupique.

Ingredients

- 12 slices of white bread
- 2 large eggs, hard-cooked
- 8 ounces black caviar
- Sour cream, for serving

Instructions

Toast the bread lightly. Peel the eggs and grate them on the large holes of a box grater. Spread half the bread slices with the caviar. Top the caviar with egg, dividing it equally among the sandwiches. Top with the remaining slices of bread, cut the sandwiches on the diagonal, and place on sandwich plates. Add a small ramekin of sour cream to each plate for dipping.

Note: There are many online sources for black bowfin caviar.

OYSTER STEW *Serves 1*

Ingredients

- 1/4 cup clam juice
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 teaspoon celery salt
- 6 extra-select or large East Coast oysters, shucked, with their liquor
- 2 cups half-and-half
- Sweet Hungarian paprika for serving
- Oyster crackers for serving

Instructions

Put the clam juice, butter, Worcestershire, and celery salt in a heavy medium saucepan over high heat. When the butter melts, add the oysters and their liquor and cook, stirring, until the oysters become plump and the edges begin to ruffle, about 45 seconds. Add the half-and-half and cook, stirring often, until it is just coming to a boil, about 3 minutes.

Pour the stew into a warmed soup bowl. Garnish with a shake of paprika and serve immediately, with oyster crackers.