

Creehan's Copper Grill sophisticated

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MIRAMAR BEACH – Whether you are visiting Copper Grill for the first time, or are a returning guest, you are in for a treat.

Copper Grill, now known as Creehan's Copper Grill, is one of the latest projects of perpetually busy chef Tim Creehan of Beach Walk Crystal Beach.

Fans of the original concept can rest assured that the changes have been few, and all for the better. Copper Grill is a high-energy place. At the center of the dining room is the active open kitchen. It is surrounded by tables filled with diners enjoying music, conversation and food.

Copper Grill's menu continues to focus on steak and lobster, but also includes lamb, veal and a variety of fish and shellfish. It is also peppered with dishes from Beach Walk, including the excellent kung pao oysters appetizer (crisp-fried oysters in a sweet and spicy Asian-style sauce) and ethereal white chocolate banana cream pie.

Appetizer selections focus on seafood, with the portobello mushroom stack being the only appetizer without seafood. Shrimp scampi featured tender shrimp in a subtle garlic butter sauce.

An appetizer of blackened diver scallops was perfect. Restraint was shown in the blackening seasoning so that it enhanced, rather than overwhelmed, the large scallops. A shiitake ragout added subtle earthiness, and vanilla butter a hint of sweetness.

Soups include rich lobster bisque and a classic French onion. Among the salads, the Caesar had good croutons, capers and red onion. Shrimp can be added. Tomato salads come with a choice of house made mozzarella, or Bermuda onion.

All steaks at Copper Grill are Certified Angus Beef. What you choose is a matter of style.

For huge flavor go for the Cowboy rib steak which is grilled bone-in to get the most flavor. Filets are buttery with good, but understated flavor, and include an option grilled on the bone.

Strip steaks, which are known for lots of flavor, include the New York Strip (boneless) and Kansas City Strip (with the bone). A 24-ounce porterhouse is the best of both with the filet on one side and strip on the other.

Steaks can be served with add-ons including Destin topping (crab and shrimp in a beurre blanc) or Oscar topping (crab, asparagus and Hollandaise). Other meat options include rack of lamb and a veal porterhouse.

Just inside the front door there is a tank filled with large Maine lobsters (in the 5- to 10-pound range). They are served cracked, with drawn butter and a lemon beurre blanc.

African lobster is also offered as an entrée (alone, with a beef filet or with shrimp). Grouper is served topped with crabmeat and shrimp, while pepper crusted tuna is served rare.

Side dishes shouldn't be missed. Creamed spinach is a steakhouse staple, and the version at Copper Grill is rich and delicious. We also had excellent sautéed corn that had just a hint of pepper.

A sampler platter lets you try asparagus, crisp fries, onion rings, sautéed mushrooms and corn. All sides are ample to share.

In addition to the wonderful banana pie, desserts include profiteroles filled with chocolate mousse, tiramisu, and white chocolate Napoleon. Crème brulee is caramelized tableside.

Copper Grill has a good wine selection, and a menu of specialty drinks. The Coppertini tastes like a sweet, juicy peach.

There is no children's menu, but children are welcome. Menu portions are large enough that kids often share an entrée with their parents.

In addition to the menu items that are recognizable from Beach Walk, some of the staff is as well. They bring the skills they honed at Beach Walk to Copper Grill, while doing a wonderful job of keeping the character of Copper Grill that makes it a convivial, sophisticated place to dine.

Restaurant: Creehan's Copper Grill

Location: 11225 U.S. Highway 98 West, Miramar Beach

Telephone: 654-6900

Hours: Open at 5 p.m. daily

Handicap accessibility: good

Children's menu: no

Reservations: recommended

Price range:

Appetizers, \$9 - \$14

Soups and Salads, \$7 - \$15

Entrees, \$28 - \$54

Dessert, \$5 - \$9

Sides, \$4 - \$10

Payment: Major credit cards

Atmosphere: * * * *

Value: * * * *

Food: * * * *

Overall rating: * * * *