

Review

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Flavors Union Leader



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MOONLIGHT MEADERY

FREE TOURS AND TASTINGS

27 Londonderry Rd. # 17, Londonderry

The Union Leader has three teams of reviewers checking out restaurants around the state. They grade on a scale of 100 points, typically in five categories.

Atkinson Resort & Country Club

85 Country Club Drive, Atkinson; 362-8700; atkinsonresort.com

Serving: Sunday brunch from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Labor Day through Father's Day in the Stagecoach Grille. Restaurant open seven days through December.

Pricing: Brunch is \$20.95 for adults, \$18.95 for seniors 60 and over, \$10.95 ages 7-10; children under 7 eat free.

A satisfying brunch at the Atkinson

It was a beautiful late fall afternoon. The snow was all gone, the sun was shining and it was unseasonably warm. A perfect day to head out to the golf course ... to eat.

Rather than our usual dinner expedition, we decided to change things up a little and head out for brunch. We weren't interested in a late breakfast; we wanted to do a traditional, multi-station, prix-fixe brunch. After some diligent Googling, the one that caught our eye was at the Atkinson Resort and Country Club.

It wasn't until we had solidified our plan and hit the road that I was struck by the potential consequences of bringing our Teenage Bottomless Pit to an all-you-can-eat meal of any kind. As we drove, I had visions of window shades being quickly pulled down and the "Come In We're Open" sign flipped to "Out of Business" once the management spied TBP ambling toward the door.

To their credit, the staff at the Atkinson was warm and gracious, with nary a gasp or hint of trepidation when we and our hungry, hulking offspring arrived at the hostess stand to be seated.

Atmosphere: 17/20

Brunch is served in the Stagecoach Grille, the Atkinson's main restaurant, located on the lower level of the sprawling Craftsman-style clubhouse. The restaurant is large, seating up to 200, but it's divided into smaller dining areas with a mix of booths and tables that makes the large space seem more intimate. Dark mahogany woodwork balances with light walls to make the room comfortable and inviting. Floor-to-ceiling windows look out onto the golf course, making it hard for some members of our dining party to decide whether they'd really rather be eating or out playing.

Selection: 25/30

The main "hot" table featured scrambled eggs, pancakes, French toast, banana crepes, home fries, bacon, sausage links, sliced steak au jus, a chicken-breast dish, potatoes, and vegetable du jour.

Around the corner was the centerpiece of the brunch, the omelette/waffle/carving station, where two cooks stood by to take our orders or slice some prime rib or ham.

Beyond that was a most attractive (and tasty) display in which smoked salmon, salads and a variety of fruit trays shared an L-shaped table with some fabulous desserts.

And to the other side was a muffin/bagel/bread toasting station, with assorted pastries and breakfast breads.

OG was a bit surprised to find no Eggs Benedict, but aside from that brunch staple, we found pretty much everything we expected and wanted.

Strategy is important when you have so many different choices and want to partake of a representative sample. Unfortunately, we didn't think ours through completely before grabbing our plates and heading to the serving tables. As a result, we ended up with some duplication, and none of us ever made it to the waffle station.

The food: 25/30

Our Gourmet: My custom-built omelette was excellent (the cook joked that it was the best he'd ever made). The French toast was made not with the crusty baguette I had predicted, but with a dense, cinnamon-swirl white bread that was slightly sweet and excellent, even without maple syrup or other add-ons. And I really enjoyed the variety at the salad station.

As for TBP, "savoring" was not part of the strategy. After no less than five trips through the buffet line for untold amounts of eggs, bacon and potatoes — along with samplings of French toast, crepes, banana bread, steak, chicken, sausage links, finished off with a slice of cheesecake — he finally pushed himself (slowly) away from the table.

"The bacon was good, the home fries were crazy good, and the eggs were good," said TBP. "To be honest, nothing was really 'special', except the home

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Our Gourmet

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fries, but it was all really good." High praise indeed.

The Dining Companion: OG and I tried to be a bit more conservative and forward-thinking than the boy. We took small portions of most items, then once seated, cut them in half or thirds to share and then forced ourselves to take a breather before making the circuit once again. Especially good were the banana crepes, French toast, pesto pasta salad, prime rib, and yes, those crazy good home fries.

For dessert, OG and I shared a chocolate mousse pie and Tiramisu. The pie was light and delicious, and after our first few bites of Tiramisu we thought we had found the one that would rival our Baltimore best-ever, but it did not have a consistent creamy texture all the way through. Still, it's one of the best we've had in New Hampshire so far!

Lasting impressions: 20/20

TDC: In our younger years (pre-TBP), I would look forward to going to Sunday Brunch — a lazy catch-up on the past few weeks with friends over a meal suited to everyone — breakfast for us late sleepers and lunch for those early birds. Then somewhere

between work, kids, and just the everyday hubbub, brunch disappeared from our lives.

The Atkinson took us back to those good days. It's comfortable, relaxing, and totally unhurried. We were served by two terrific waitresses who kept our empty plates cleared and our coffee and juices topped off without a hint of a rush to get the table turned.

The value? At \$21 per person it's certainly more than you'd pay for breakfast, but it's great food, all-inclusive (except for alcohol) and, as TBP advised us on his fourth trip to the line, "You're definitely getting your money's worth."

The Atkinson has a brunch discount card that makes the experience even more pleasant: On your first visit you receive the card, and each subsequent punch gives you a larger discount on your brunch. The sixth is free if used by Father's Day.

I don't know if we'll get to the freebie, but I've already planned two relaxing brunches for upcoming special occasions.

TOTAL: 87/100