

The Atlantic City Country Club (ACCC) sits on 170 acres in Northfield, New Jersey just minutes from Atlantic City and has changed a lot over the years; so much in fact that it's one of the best kept secrets around. This famous (and historic) landmark, which was once an exclusive, private club for the elite, is *open to the public*. That's right – mere mortals can now not only eat at its award-winning restaurant, The Tap Room Grille, but they can play a round of golf at one of the top 50 courses in the USA and take a nostalgic walk through history.

The ACCC is filled with surprises (and I mean filled) as one could literally spend an entire day there enjoying a delectable array of fabulous food, great wines, unsurpassed golfing, as well as a history lesson. And, did I mention that all of these delights are nicely wrapped in a breath taking, panoramic view of the bayside?

Play a 'round' with history

The club was built in 1897 and is still considered one of the most prestigious golf clubs in the country. So, if you like to golf and want to 'play a round with history' this is the place to do it as you'll not only get in a great round, you'll be joining the ranks of some of the games' all time greats such as Sammy Snead, Ben Hogan, Fred Couples, Bobby Jones, and Arnold Palmer – all of whom played a round or two at the club. The course, with its reputation for fast, firm greens and uncompromising playing conditions is actually the place where the golf terms 'Birdie' and 'Eagle' were coined.

"The course is immaculate, the greens flawless, and because the wind is always a factor it adds to the difficulty of the course," says Edward Camm, an avid golfer and frequent guest at the club.

"The practice facility is among the best I've seen with different areas for chipping, putting, and full shots," he continued. "It's one of my favorite courses and if you're a serious golfer it's not to be missed."

In addition to the exceptional golf, there are great views from many of the holes as much of the course is along the intercoastal waterway. The 14th hole has a tee box situated on an island from where you can see the Atlantic City skyline. And, because the course yardages are from 6,577 to 5,249 yards with 3 sets of tees it allows for golfers of all skill levels to enjoy a day on the links.

Velvety fairways attract all types of golfers

Camm is not alone with his ongoing praise of the velvety fairways as Bob Hope, Frank Sinatra, Willie Mays, Joe Louis, Joe Namath, Julius Erving, Robert Di Niro, Roger Clemens, and Mickey Mantle (to name a few) not only played golf there but have sung the praises of the club as well. In addition to its roster of celebrity golfers, the course has hosted six USGA Major Championships and three USGA Women's Opens. The ACCC is one of the best places to enjoy a day on the links!

And the rest is history

Since the early 1940s, the club was owned by the Fraser family whose patriarch, Jim 'Jolly' Fraser, a former golf pro from Fraser, Scotland and one of the first pros at Seaview. Since then, Fraser's son Sonny (a great amateur golfer) sold the club to his brother Leo, former head of the PGA. In 1977, the Fraser family sold the club to the Bally-Hilton Casino Company and since Harrah's Entertainment Inc. now owns Bally's, Harrah's is the present owner.

In 2008, *Golf Magazine* included the course in its *Top 100 Courses You Can Play* list. In 2007, *Golf Digest* ranked the course *No. 7 in the State of New Jersey*, including private courses. And, in 2006 *Golf Week Magazine* rated the course as the *No. 1 Public Daily Fee Golf Course* in New Jersey and one of the top 100 classic courses in the country.

Another secret of the club, besides the fact that it's open to the public, is it offers reduced green fees during the autumn months – the perfect time to golf at the shore!

To book a tee time, call (609) 236-4401. Psst! PGA instruction is also available.

The Tap Room Grille

With its above par dining, the ACCC's Tap Room Grille has been rated one of the *Top 50 19th Holes* in golf by *Golf Digest*. And, it's no wonder as not only do the menus incorporate the new with the old, it has a classic dark-wood bar and the original wood flooring, complete with spike marks.

Ed Daggers at the helm

Executive Chef, Ed Daggers, who has been creating culinary magic for many years, provides the food and the ultimate dining experience for club patrons. Daggers is no stranger to the food industry as after graduating from the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) Daggers was the chef at the Starwood's Hotel & Resorts, Norfolk, VA, the Kings Mill Resort, Williamsburg, VA, the Memphis Country Club, Harrah's Waterfront Buffet, Harrah's Waterfront Tower, and owned his own restaurant in Cape Hatteras, NC called the Austin Creek Grille. In other words Daggers is a foodie among foodies and knows his stuff!

"I love old hotels and clubs and really wanted to move back to the area where I grew up so when this opportunity became available, I jumped at it," says Daggers.

Tap Room Grille: The perfect marriage of the old with the new

Daggers, who grew up in Aston, PA., says he's been cooking and crating culinary delights for most of his life and has made the menu at the Tap Room Grille a unique and clever marriage of the old and the new.

"I like to put a personal twist on some of the old classics but still keep many of the classic dishes exactly the same as this is what our clientele likes." Daggers says that he makes it a point to change the menu every year and focuses on a lot of fresh fish – all while creating new and delectable dishes and keeping the classics alive and well.

The menu is varied and features steak, lobster, prime rib and the freshest seafood including the crab cakes as well as salads, homemade soups and desserts to die for. And, while you're enjoying a sumptuous breakfast, lunch, dinner or Sunday brunch, you get to enjoy the many, many historical photos and other treasures that line the walls. Or, you can just spend the time looking out the big bay windows which provide a spectacular view of the golf course, bay, and the neon lights of the Atlantic City skyline.

Breakfast: club style

Breakfast, which begins at 8 am on weekends and 11 am during the week and features many favorites (create your own omelet, hot cakes, crab Benedict, petit sirloin and eggs, etc.) but one of the most popular dishes is the Banana Foster French Toast with caramelized bananas and pecans on thick slices of fresh raison bread for \$8.50.

Lunch time at the club

Lunch, which begins at 11 am, offers signature salads including a classic Caesar, Cobb, and a Mandarin Orange salad which is artfully created with wild greens and Romaine lettuce topped with a citrus vinaigrette, Maytag blue cheese, Mandarin orange slices, pine nuts, and crab meat for \$18.00. Diners can also chose from a host of sandwiches including crab cakes, char broiled prime rib, shaved rib eye, sliders which include two mini burgers and two min crab cakes, and several turkey delights all delightfully prepared with fresh, roasted turkey. And, of course there are the homemade soups.

What's for dinner?

The better question would be *what's not for dinner* as the dinner menu at the Tap Room Grille has something to satisfy every palette starting with a host of tasty appetizers such as clams Casino, shrimp cocktail, shrimp and crab cocktail, Jersey steamers, mussels, and crab cakes.

Once the appetizer portion of Tap Room Grille dining experience is complete, diners can choose from several entrée salads, pasta entrees including lobster ravioli (\$24) and grilled shrimp with pesto (\$16) as well as a large variety of chicken and veal dishes including the club favorite Veal Louis; a breaded pan fried veal cutlet topped with jumbo crab meat in a Grand Marnier butter sauce (\$28).

"The veal dishes were always popular with the old time members and continue to be popular today," says Dagers.

And, if the above selections are not enough to satisfy the carnivore in some diners, patrons can also choose from slow roasted prime rib, a blue cheese crusted 10-ounce filet mignon, a 6 oz. filet mignon and crab cake combo or a 14-ounce char grilled prime NY strip steak. All entrees include a vegetable, baked potato or French Fries or pasta.

During the summer months dinner is served Thursday through Saturday and now through New Years it is served Friday and Saturday nights.

Crab cakes: the coup de grace of the Tap Room Grille

And, now we come to the mouth-watering, cooked to order Country Club crab cakes that have been dubbed as the best in South Jersey. These crab cakes (two 5-ounce cakes per order) are made with jumbo crab meat only – no fillers – and topped with a scrumptious Imperial sauce. According to Dagers, the cakes are pan sautéed and creamy on the inside and crusty on the outside and a big, big, big favorite among diners. The price? \$29.

There are also quite a few other seafood choices including Australian lobster tails, flounder, and pan-seared Atlantic salmon.

“I also try to include other fresh seafood choices and depending on what’s available that could mean Grouper, Sea Bass, Red Snapper, Tile fish, Stripped Bass, and Tuna,” says Dagers. And, of course, whenever possible, Dagers says he always tries to buy local.

Sunday Brunch

The club also offers a Sunday Brunch (\$29.95 per person) from 10 am to 2 pm. Children under 12 can enjoy brunch for \$14.95 and children under 4 eat for free. Can’t beat that. Brunch includes omelet and carving stations as well as the largest chocolate pastry display in South Jersey, live entertainment, complimentary free valet parking, and dining rooms are available for groups from 10 to 100. Not enough to whet your appetite? In the warmer months, diners can enjoy outdoor terrace seating. And, just so know, *Philadelphia Magazine* voted the club’s Sunday brunch the best in South Jersey.

For reservations please call: 609.236.4465.

Hosting a special event? This is the place for you

The Atlantic City Country Club also hosts special events such as a recent Australian Wine Dinner which included five courses and the wine for \$69 per person and has everything you need for a wedding, banquet, reunion, golf event, Bar or Bat Mitzvah including a main dining room that seats 225 guests as well as four smaller dining rooms that seat between 12 and 25 guests.

The banquet rooms open to a lovely terrace with panoramic views of the course’s rolling fairways and the glittering Atlantic City skyline. And, of course, the club’s award winning culinary team will customize your event menu to suit both your budget and any special dietary considerations.

Did I mention that even if you’re not a golfer, the ACCC is definitely worth a visit for a great meal as not only will you enjoy a delicious meal with unsurpassed ambiance, you’ll experience a pleasant trip through history.

The bottom line is this: take the time to go to the ACCC as it truly is the best kept secret in the area.