

At Sea – Day 52 Nov. 18:

We woke to a nice sunrise this morning and a calm sea. This was the second day at sea on our way from Sydney, Australia to Ile des Pins in the French Protectorate of New Caledonia.



As is her custom now, Barbara trotted down to the Culinary Arts Center at 9am to watch the production of the Good Morning Amsterdam TV show, hosted by Cruise Director Gene



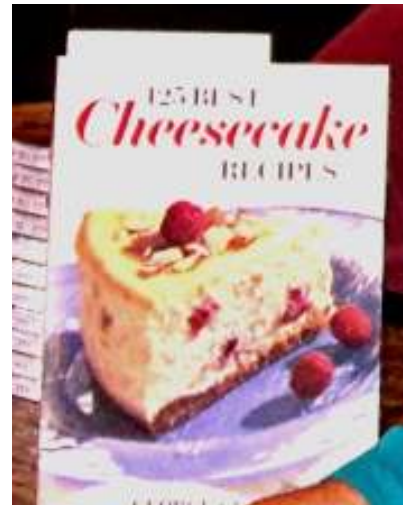
Young and Hostess Adele. This morning there was a light hearted interview of George Geary, the guest chef on board the Amsterdam. As shown on the left.

George has written 9 cook books loaded with recipes. This morning the discussion was about his career and what he does on the Amsterdam. Among other things he conducts cooking demonstrations and gives one-on-one cooking classes where the passengers pay a fee for the expert instruction.

At 11am there was a cooking demonstration by the same George Geary who had been interviewed earlier on the Good Morning Amsterdam TV show. Barbara, who has developed an interest in watching other people cook, attended this presentation. George was attired in his chef's coat and is shown on the right. Beside George in the picture is a stack of his recipe books on board for sale.



His recipe book was entitled “125 Best Cheesecake Recipes”, as shown on the right. Of the 9 books he has written this is the only one he had with him and available for sale. As luck would have it our dinner table mate Esther has an abiding love of cheesecake. Over the time we have dined with her on cruise ships, the selection and evaluation of the dessert cheesecake usually turns out to be a major subject of discussion and debate at dinner. After Chef George’s presentation about his cookbook, Esther tramped up to the counter and bought one for her.



Although Chef George spent some time discussing his recipe book for making cheesecake, his main message today was a demonstration of how to make sauce to serve with pasta. He called the sauce, “Vodka Sauce a la Farfalle”. His website is www.georgegeary.com where more information may be found. However, he passed out copies of his recipe today so we are included the recipe for “Vodka Sauce a la Farfalle” on the page below.

HOLLAND AMERICA PRESENTS GUEST CHEF GEORGE GEARY
VODKA SAUCE A LA FARFALLE
Serves 4

INGREDIENTS
4 tbsp unsalted butter
2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
1 tbsp onion, minced fine
1 clove garlic, minced
¼ cup of vodka
1 ½ cups whipping (35%) cream, room temperature
½ cup chicken stock
½ cup plum tomatoes, crushed
2 tsp fresh sage, chopped fine
1 tsp kosher salt
1 large egg yolk
1/3 cup parmesan cheese, grated
1 tbsp italian parsley, chopped
1 lb farfalle pasta, (bowtie)

METHOD
In a skillet on medium heat, melt butter and oil. Add onion and garlic until softened, about 3 minutes. Do not brown. Add vodka, and let it reduce for about 4 minutes. Add cream, stock, tomatoes, sage and salt. Whisking to bring sauce together, simmer until thickened, and coats the back of a spoon, about 8 minutes. Remove from heat.

In a small bowl, combine egg yolk and a few spoonfuls of sauce to heat egg yolk. Add back into sauce. Toss in cheese and pour on cooked pasta. Sprinkle with parsley.

Website: www.georgegeary.com

Holland America Line
CULINARY ARTS
CENTER FOOD & WINE

The major event of today was the Cruise Critic luncheon in the main dining room that had been arranged by Ray (JORAY). Invitations had been sent out a few days before and more than 40 people attended the event. A Cruise Critic lunch menu had been printed out by the ship and we felt quite special ordering lunch from our own menus. There was no special business conducted. At one point Ray came to each table and told us that the last "Meet and Greet" meeting of Cruise Critic folks would be December 2 while we are in transit between Honolulu and Los Angeles.



Louise (HAPPYGLOBETROTTER), on the left, also made an announcement regarding arrangements for bus transfer from the ship to the airport after we are docked in Los Angeles. It was painful to think that this marvelous time was drawing to a close.

At this point we decided to take pictures of the Cruise Critic people at the tables around us. Some families and friends are following this blog and may be interested in knowing that their special Cruise Critic person or persons on the cruise are alive and well (well fed that is). Timing was such that we didn't get everyone but we gave it a try. While we know most of the Cruise Critic folks there are some we don't know names with certainty so we'll just show pictures and let the folks reading the blog sort it out.













After the Cruise Critic luncheon we passed by the TV screen giving the Amsterdam's current location. We took a picture of the display which is shown below. It appears we are more than half way to Ile des Pins in New Caledonia.



Another event of the day was the formal dinner in the main dining room. We dressed in our formal clothes and entered the dining room with the other people who, like us, “cleaned up pretty well”. We were happy when Presti, our assistant dining room manager informed us that he had arranged for one of the ship’s officers to be a host at our table tonight. While we always enjoy the conversation brought to the table by the ship’s officers, another nice feature is that they provide all the wine for the meal. Tonight we were pleased to meet Leandra, who comes from South Africa and is a member of the team of people who manage the shore excursion department on the Amsterdam. A picture of Leandra (front-left) at our table is shown on the right.



Leandra shared her perspective on the joys and challenges of providing enjoyable and worthwhile tours in the various ports we visit. She works with the passengers at the Excursion Office counter so when we book excursions in the future it will be nice to see her familiar face.

When we returned to our stateroom we found another “Pillow Gift” from the Amsterdam. This time it was two soft and cuddly panda bear dolls. Barbara is holding one of our new pets in the photo on the right.



The Amsterdam sailed on through the night on calm seas and warm breezes. Tomorrow we arrive at the anchorage in Ile des Pins, New Caledonia. We have heard some people say it is not worth visiting while others say the beauty is unmatched. We shall see.