

Luminae: Celebrity Millennium Cruises' Suite Class Experience

Cruising may be on hold for now but travelers are making plans to set sail in the future. Writer Sandy Bornstein tells us what it was like to experience Suite Class life on Celebrity Cruises' Millennium ship and its specialty restaurant, Luminae.



The Luminae dining room on the Celebrity Cruises Millennium Ship.

Luminae Restaurant: Celebrity Cruises' Sophisticated and Innovative Cuisine

While going on a cruise is a special treat anytime, we were excited to experience our stateroom which had been [upgraded](#) to Suite Class on the [Celebrity Cruises](#) Millennium ship which we boarded from the Yokohama terminal in Japan. From the moment my husband and I were introduced to the Suite Class staff, we knew we were going to have a very special experience.

This was especially true while dining in the Luminae Restaurant and relaxing in The Retreat. Both places offer exclusive experiences and exemplary service for Celebrity Suite Class passengers. We were greeted by our names whenever we were in these quiet, secluded places. The attentive Retreat Concierges, Vannessa and Lee, made sure we never waited in long lines during disembarkation and embarkation or while participating in time consuming immigration procedures. This personal touch made me temporarily forget the enormous size of the vessel.

Celebrity Millennium Cruise Suite Class cabins are more spacious and include attentive butler service along with extremely personable stateroom attendants. All of the requests made to these well-trained crew members are honored promptly. Our butler, Ramir, catered to all of our special requests including our nightly after-dinner drinks.

Sea days are welcomed after long days of touring. Being able to relax in both the indoor and the outdoor spaces, the indoor Retreat Lounge on deck four and the Retreat Sundeck on deck 12, are added bonuses, especially on long voyages. These recently renovated areas on many of the Solstice and Millennium class ships offer a peaceful place to unwind along with a staff willing to personalize the cruise experience. Since the newer Edge class ships are configured differently and not all of the older ships have been renovated, it is wise to review the Celebrity Cruises website before booking accommodations.



Upside Down Salmon Salad for lunch.

EXTRAORDINARY DINING

While the majority of the Millennium passengers dined in the Ocean View Café, the Metropolitan restaurant, or one of the specialty dining rooms, we had the opportunity to eat in the intimate Luminae restaurant. At each meal, we were warmly greeted at the door by the restaurant's friendly and polished maître d', Franko, and then escorted to an awaiting table.

Along one wall of the narrow dining room, oversized round windows captured the natural light as it ebbed and flowed throughout the day. Drastic changes in the outdoor temperature sometimes made the coveted window seats with an endless view of the sea or adjacent port a secondary choice. Freezing temperatures and snow were part of our late Fall itinerary. Ample space between the furniture allowed for flexibility to reposition tables to accommodate fluctuating group sizes and simultaneously made

the room feel much more like a boutique restaurant than a mega dining room aboard a cruise ship.

The waitstaff and the sommelier had excellent facial recognition skills. Within no time, everyone who entered the Luminae was greeted by his or her name. This superlative skill was equally matched by the staffs' understanding of the restaurant's revolving menu. All of these seasoned employees offered astute observations about the items on the daily menu that rotates every 14-days. On this two-week sailing around Japan, I had only one entrée that fell short of my expectations.

After Franko offered a personal tour of the ship's galley, I better understood why the food preparation was remarkable. Except for gluten-free products, all of the Luminae menu items were prepared in a designated section and were made to order with quality ingredients. At each Luminae meal, we tasted a sophisticated blend of flavors, spices, and textures not customarily experienced aboard a large cruise ship. With a smaller dining audience to accommodate, I was always guaranteed having cooked food items arrive at the table piping hot.



Smoked salmon and accompaniments for breakfast.

STARTING WITH BREAKFAST

Other than a few days when our schedule did not allow for a leisurely breakfast, we took advantage of the made-to-order breakfasts. A customized two-egg omelet was one of my favorite selections. Delicious sides of roasted tomatoes, oven-baked potatoes, spears of asparagus, and sautéed mushrooms added nutrients along with color.

Another choice was the smoked salmon plate served with capers, red onions, tomatoes, and diced hard-boiled eggs. My husband, Ira, ordered a Belgium waffle topped with strawberries a few times on our trip.



A beautiful Belgium Waffle for breakfast at Luminae.

LUNCH AT SEA

On embarkation day, we were first introduced to the Luminae with a tasty lobster roll. After that, the Luminae was only open for lunch on sea days. To limit the number of mid-day calories, we usually opted for the less formal buffet at the Oceanview Café and the SpaCafe and Juice Bar. When our shore excursions brought us back to the ship at an odd time, we simply ordered from the enhanced room service menu.

During a lunchtime visit, we were intrigued by the smoked salmon salad with crispy potato galette, caviar, and baby lettuce. Ira loved his wild mushroom pappardelle mixed with truffle cream and asparagus and topped with parmesan cheese.



Mushroom Pappardelle.

MEMORABLE FOOD SELECTIONS AT LUMINAE ON THE CELEBRITY MILLENNIUM SHIP

Dining rooms with limited menus can present challenges for people with special dietary needs or for people who are seeking nutrient-dense food selections. Fortunately, my desire to avoid meat and poultry did not prevent me from experiencing Luminae's creative culinary menu. I was pleasantly surprised by a wide assortment of vegetables.

Creative Chef Starters

Each evening, the chef's starter whetted the Suite Class passengers' appetite. If the item included pork, meat, or poultry, I was unable to partake since only one option was

available. Fortunately, this only happened at a handful of dinners. The remainder of the time, I would gladly taste the exciting combination of ingredients, many of which noticeably appear incompatible but turned out to be delicious. Some of my favorites included the watermelon goat cheese flan; the cauliflower-white chocolate puree, salmon tartar, green peas, and mint pannacotta with crab salad; and the beetroot blue cheese macaron. The caprese martini, another favorite, forced me to put my desire to follow a low-fat dairy diet on hold. Made from burrata, cream, and milk, the Luminae version derived its flavor from a mixture of balsamic vinegar, basil, olive oil, pine nuts, tomato, garlic, micro-greens, and a dash of parmesan cheese.



The “Caprese Martini” in the Luminae.

Until I had the cauliflower-white chocolate puree and salmon tartar, I would never have thought to combine cauliflower with white chocolate on the same plate. Surprisingly, all of the different ingredients – cauliflower, cream, onions, white chocolate, salmon,

chives, olive oil, shallots, lemon, salt, and pepper – came together in this very unique starter.

I'm sure my mouth opened wide when I took my first look at the beetroot blue cheese macaron. This layered creation made from beetroot, almond flour, eggs, sugar, milk, butter, blue cheese grapes, lemon, and mint could easily be mistaken for its dessert cousin. This healthier knock-off was quite unique.

Remarkable Appetizers and Entrees

On the first night, I ordered a cold smoked salmon appetizer served on rye crumble and seasoned with a bit of horseradish. My fish preference was complemented with an entrée of roasted turbot that included fennel croquettes and baby leeks along with a Pernod velouté sauce. In both instances, the authentic taste of the fish was augmented by flavorful seasonings and sauces. After this meal, I knew that my dining experience would be far superior to any previous Celebrity Cruises sailing.

Three other notable fish entrées were the Alaskan halibut in a ginger broth garnished with baby bok choy and sesame sticky rice; the butter-poached lobster with risotto, sea beans, pea puree, and vanilla essence; and the grilled barramundi with artichoke puree, leeks, and fava bean pesto.



Butter poached lobster.

Frequently, colorful food presentations added interest to the meal. One example was a chilled lobster salad with hearts of palm, cilantro, sliced red pepper, and pineapple drizzled with a light vanilla dressing. Another salad that photographed well and tasted delicious was the salad of white balsamic glazed baby vegetables.

One evening, I ordered a daily Luminae vegetarian option. I adored the wild mushroom and cabbage ravioli with a tomato and ricotta pesto topped with asparagus. Not only did it present well on the plate, but the assortment of vegetables was in perfect harmony.



White Balsamic Glazed Vegetables.

Picture Perfect Desserts

Chocolate desserts are almost always on the top of my list. The Luminae pastry chef definitely knows the ins and out of chocolate and will undoubtedly please all chocoholics aboard the Millennium. Scrumptious examples of the chef's expertise are seen in the chocolate palet with fleur de sel and caramel gelato, the milk chocolate ice cream and Bailey's sundae, and the chocolate caramel custard with pretzel gelato. The flambéed chocolate bombe stopped most table conversations as the server ignited the decadent dessert.



Dark Chocolate Ganache.

Occasionally, I had no choice but to order a non-chocolate dessert. It is hard to resist a fluffy dessert souffle. I savored every mouthful of the Luminae's passion fruit souffle. Having previously sailed on Celebrity Cruise ships, I eagerly anticipated the chef's finale, a slice of baked Alaska. In the Luminae restaurant, this individually prepared dessert is totally covered with Italian meringue. The massive portion could easily feed two guests and is accompanied by a berry puree.



Baked Alaska for dessert on the last night.

It is rare to be disappointed when the dining service is exceptional. However, some passengers should consider a few pointers to make sure that everything goes as smoothly as possible.

5 TIPS FOR HAVING A MEMORABLE LUMINAE EXPERIENCE ON THE CELEBRITY MILLENNIUM CRUISE

- Passengers with dietary restrictions should inform the cruise ship as soon as possible. With advance notice, the galley will be able to honor most requests.
- Don't be shy. When none of the items appeal to you, ask for one of the other restaurant menus (the Metropolitan or Blu).
- Consider arriving early since seating is handled on a first-come-first-served basis.

Reservations were not accepted during our sailing.

- Enhance your dining experience by using the sommelier's expertise in selecting the best wine for your meal.
- To make sure you can fit into your clothes at the end of the cruise, consider walking the stairs instead of taking the elevator.

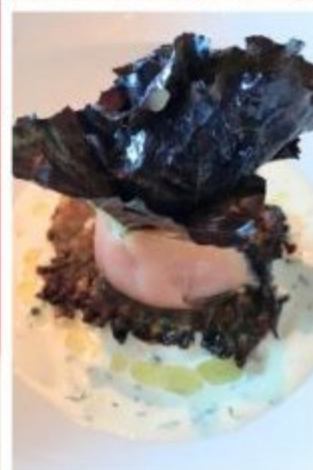
While the cost of a Celebrity Millennium Cruise Suite Class cabin is dependent on many factors, the overall quality of the experience cannot be compared to any other cabin level. From the accommodations to the Luminae/Retreat to the impeccable service, a Suite Class voyage is filled with luxurious amenities enhancing the onboard ship experience. When you add these fantastic perks to enriching shore excursion itineraries, Celebrity Suite Class guests return home with incredible stories to tell for decades to come.

For more information about Celebrity Cruises, visit their website to be kept apprised of upcoming voyages.

— Story and photos by Sandy Bornstein

Hungry for more? Here's our *Guide to Cruises for Newbies*; and Sandy's award-winning article on *choosing the right shore excursion* when cruising. Want to cook like you're on a cruise? Celebrity Cruises and Luminae were kind enough to share a couple of recipe videos with us to make at home: Eggs Benedict and Lamb Meatballs.

Pin this deliciousness to your foodie and travel Pinterest boards so you can refer to them later.



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