



ALL ABOARD THE CHEF'S TABLE LUMIERE ON THE ROYAL PRINCESS

Donning a chef's jacket, I am led through the galley to see a kitchen staff orchestrating dinner for thousands. I glide past cooks slicing and dicing, the smell of sizzling onion (with bacon?), puffs of steam billowing, and a parade of friendly hellos and slight bows – this is my welcome to the *Royal Princess's* Chef's Table Lumiere.

The sparkling stainless steel galley sets a cheerful tone as we introduce ourselves. We are a party of 10 about to go for a culinary ride of a lifetime! Our hosts are Maître d'Hôtel Generoso Mazzone and Executive Chef Saverio Brattoli.

While sharing some staggering stats — 25,000 meals are served aboard the *Royal Princess* per day — our first appetizer is passed (there would be three more to come). It is Lobster Margarita with Avocado and Mango, the citrusy taste is a fiesta in my mouth. Sweet Potato and Chili Samosas are next, served with Veuve Clicquot. I'm tickled! A Mini Steak Tartar, charmingly served in oblong white dishes, follows. The tartar is heaped on a spoon at one end of the dish, next to a peeled tomato and a small triangle of pita bread. It is a cute tartar boat with the spoon as an oar.

As we leave the galley, we give back our white jackets and proceed through the Allegro Dining Room to the chef's table. The table itself is an attraction: Rising up from its center is a spectacular fountain-like Murano glass sculpture. A curtain of silver shimmery strings that opens and closes provides a soft wall of privacy. The table-scape is luxe — absent of color but rich with silver, gold and glistening glass.

A superb six-course meal ensues. Each course is lavishly plated and presented by Mr. Mazzone who is the Maître d' for the entire ship. Most amusing is that each guest has his or her own waiter serving each course simultaneously, like a culinary ballet! Of course, wine is part of the dance and a standout was Pouilly – Fuisse, Laboure – Roi served with the Amuse Bouche (Summer Sweet Corn Veloute) and an appetizer of Porcini Mushroom Risotto spiked with White Truffle Oil. The last wine was a delightful Errazuriz "Late Harvest" Sauvignon Blanc from Chile. It is both palate cleansing and slightly sweet, with notes of peach and nectarine. The taste lingers, in a good way, like the memory of this very fine dinner.

Travelgirl tip: Take advantage of the special dinners aboard Princess Cruises. They offer outstanding value — this meal was easily worth twice the price. The price for this chef's table dinner was \$115. Princess's own coffee table cookbook, Courses, A Culinary Journey, is a surprise gift.

Cathie Arquilla

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