

Airport Grille

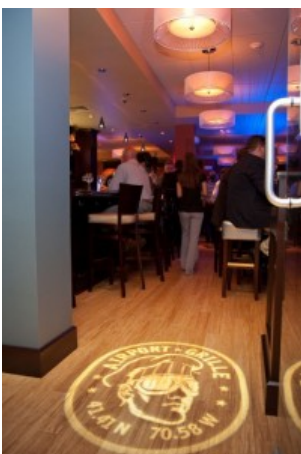


By
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It's fitting that the Airport Grille isn't too close to downtown New Bedford, because it certainly isn't your typical downtown establishment.

The Airport Grille is located right off the tarmac at the New Bedford Regional Airport. Frequented by area residents and aviators alike, this bar/restaurant is *the* place to go for a change from the downtown scene.

The main thing to remember is that the Airport Grille is an experience that cannot be had anywhere else in New Bedford. As the sun goes down outside, the lights come up inside, illuminating the restaurant and bar in a way that reminds you of New York or Miami, not New Bedford.



As you enter
the Airport
Grille...

Let's start with the interior. 'Striking' would be the first word that comes to mind. As you enter through the glass doors, the bar is on your left. The main dining area is framed by the bar on the left, the airport on the right, and another dining area in the back. That area used to be more of an outdoor dining section, but now there is a roof and heating and fans out there to allow for dining at any time of day, at any time of year.

The bar top is a beautiful, dark granite bordered by a thin strip of ice. The ice needs to be shaved down daily because it frosts up so much, but it works beautifully with the cobra tabs behind the bar. The taps give the impression that your beer is being pumped through a glacier before it reaches your glass, and the truth isn't that far off. They have six beers flowing through these taps, delivering the coldest draft brew in town including Samuel Adams newest, Latitude 48 IPA. They also have an extensive and carefully selected wine list which compliments every dish to make your dining experience more enjoyable and memorable.

Immediately after sitting down at the bar I found out that if you want to order your usual drinks or food, maybe Airport Grille isn't the place for you. That's not to say you can't get *exactly* what you want here; I just mean you are selling yourself short if you don't explore a little bit.

I suggest visiting the Airport Grille with no particular thought in mind of what you want to drink. Don't sit down and order the usual! My bartender, Jared, was a bastion of alcohol-related knowledge and drink-making know-how. I told him right away that he could prepare me any drink he chose, so long as it contained no gin or tequila.

He responded to this by quietly going about his business of mixing three drinks; one with vegetable-infused vodka, one with gin, and one with tequila. My aversion to both gin and tequila goes back to a couple of college-related experiences,

and I usually stand firm in my decision to forgo both. However, not only did Jared mix me a gin drink devoid of that distinct gin flavor I can't usually get past; he created a drink that was so good I will order it again the next time I visit the Airport Grille. In fact, I may even make a special trip there just to have another Gin Blossom.



Buttermilk Fried Oysters.

So the bar experience is top-notch, but what about the food? Almost everything served here is made from ingredients purchased locally. From the individual components of each dish all the way down to the sour mix and lime juice used in the drinks, using local products enables Chef Rob Cassi to create dishes bursting with flavor, and you can definitely taste the freshness. Not only does this result in great food, but by buying from local growers, the Airport Grille also supports the local economy. Even their ice cream is house-made with dairy from Arruda's Dairy and created using dry ice!

While there I was treated to three very delicious appetizers which were paired with three drinks, each made to perfectly compliment the food it was served with. The first appetizer was the Buttermilk Fried Oysters. Soaked in buttermilk for 12 hours and then dusted with rice flour and corn meal, these oysters were served with a spicy tarter sauce, house-pickled jalapenos, and house-made mayonnaise. It was paired with a Bloody Mary made with vegetable-infused vodka. Both the Bloody Mary mix and the vegetable-infused vodka were made in

house. The resulting drink had a very distinct flavor that went perfectly with the oysters.

Although I had never eaten oysters before, I enjoyed the combination of food and drink. The flavor of the drink echoed the flavor of the food, and I really don't think any drink could be paired better with any dish. It says a lot about Airport Grille that, while my personal preferences and prejudices wouldn't normally have allowed for me to order either drink or appetizer, I still was able to enjoy both immensely.



House-made
Bloody Mary mix
AND house-made
vegetable-
infused vodka
make this drink
one of a kind.

Too often when we go out we order the same drinks and the same food. Its comfortable, safe, and takes little thought or effort. Airport Grille challenges these notions in a way that makes you want to try new things.

My next drink was a Gin Blossom-Bombay Sapphire, St. Germain, and some orange peel. I do my best to avoid gin, but this drink was amazing. Not only will I order it again, I'm thinking of having a go at creating it at home. The smooth

flavor of the St. Germain (made from handpicked Elderflowers in the French Alps, the bottle has a shelf-life of 6 months) masked the gin flavor that turns me off so much, and the drink perfectly complemented our next appetizer, Grilled Artichokes.

Most of us are familiar with artichoke hearts, sitting there in their sad little container of brine. Those little bites pack a lot of flavor-sometimes too much. That is nowhere near what I was served at Airport Grille. Chef Rob (who hosts a cooking show on WBSM, 1420am, at 8:30 am each morning for people who want to learn how to cook restaurant style food) presented us with artichokes that were steamed and then grilled with a smokey sea salt and butter and served with a spicy remoulade consisting of house-made blacken seasoning and house-made mayo. He made a point to emphasize the traditional mayo he had created- egg yolks, salt, white pepper, vinegar and good oil; no stabilizers, no gums, no fake stuff.

Even though my rookie-level artichoke eating skills were on full display as I tried to chew it leaf-by-leaf, I was quickly informed on how to eat it correctly. I learned that you have to drag the leaf over your teeth, so you can eat the artichoke but not the leaf itself, which is hard to chew (trust me). The flavor that came out of this dish was very enjoyable, and by the time I finished eating that and drinking the Gin Blossom, I was truly impressed by Airport Grille.

The final appetizer I was served was the Venison Flat Bread: venison sausage, fennel marmalade (house-made with fennel bulbs, a touch of vinegar and sugar) & ricotta salata made from sheep's milk ricotta, which is firmer and sweeter than normal ricotta. I truly enjoy venison but have difficulty finding it on local menus, so I usually only have it once or twice a year when I visit New Hampshire or Maine. This plate was my favorite because the venison was so delicious. When it was mixed with the marmalade and ricotta salata it created a truly unique dish that you would have trouble finding anywhere in the area, and even if you did, I wager it wouldn't be

nearly as tasty.



Chai and cayenne spiced
"Dry" Ice Cream

For desert we were served ice cream, but it was ice cream unlike anything else you're likely to find in the area. It was Chai and Cayenne spiced 'Dry' ice cream. It's made from dairy purchased from Arruda's Dairy Farm (Tiverton, RI), and it employs dry ice to create this truly delicious desert. That was served together with a drink made from Patron XO Cafe, among other things. I would normally never order a drink with tequila, but after the first sip I learned a fast lesson: I should be more open-minded. The drink was like a liquid desert, and went better with the ice cream than any other drink you may prefer with your ice cream.

The Airport Grille is truly an unique place. Where else can you get amazing food (the chowder may be the best in the area), made almost entirely of local ingredients, while watching small planes come and go? The bar is unlike any you'll find in the area, and the level of commitment that Front-of-House Manager Shawn Moniz, Chef Rob, and the rest of the the staff has made to making Airport Grille more than your average restaurant is unparalleled.

You can visit any restaurant in town for a meal, but for a dining and drinking experience unlike no other, there is only one choice: The Airport Grille.

Click [HERE](#) for their new, updated menu.

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