

# HEALTHY AND GOURMET

June 23, 2010

Dinner with Michael LaDuke & New Foodie Friends



*With Executive Chef Michael LaDuke.*

Meeting the chef. Knowing where your food comes from. A restaurant that listens to its costumers. That focuses on healthy eating. On fresh ingredients. These are not conventions commonly associated with a chain restaurant. But conventions change all the time. And this time it is being done by Red Lobster.

I was thrilled to have been invited to meet executive chef and Red Lobster's Senior Director of Culinary Development (and a regular judge on the Food Network) Michael LaDuke yesterday. Red Lobster has dramatically changed their menu to incorporate dishes that use simple, wholesome ingredients but most importantly taste good. An emphasis is being placed on healthy eating. Chef LaDuke and his team recognize that "food" and "healthy" should just go together. Plain and simple.

New items on the menu include Mango Jalapeno Shrimp Skewers, Maple Glazed Chicken - with a sauce that could make cardboard palatable - and a wide selection of fresh fish choices that are, in some places, characteristic of the region. For example, walleye and halibut feature predominantly on Minnesota menus. Furthermore, locals head chefs have full control over these selections. And being someone who appreciates the simplicity of flavors, I was quite impressed.

Yes, this a restaurant chain that is receptive to the wants of its customers. While you can still get traditional fare such as coconut shrimp, crab legs, and oh-so-good-but-with-a-billion-calories cheddar biscuits, this is a vibrant, modern family restaurant that's worth every morsel of fish and crumb of rich, dark chocolate cake.



*Clockwise from top left to right: Maple-Glazed Chicken, Chocolate Wave, Tilapia in Spicy Soy Broth, New York Style Cheesecake with Strawberries, Maui Luau Shrimp and Salmon, Lobster Pizza, Mango-Jalapeno Shrimp Skewers, and Warm Chocolate Chip Lava Cookie.*

This was also a great opportunity to meet three other Minneapolis bloggers. From left to right in the photo below:

Jennifer @ Self-confessed Foodie

Melissa @ The Marketing Mama

Jennifer @ Prior Fat Girl



*Four Minnesota Bloggers.*



*One final group shot with the chef.*