

Dear Cherry,

2012 marks the 100th anniversary of the R.M.S. Titanic's maiden voyage. 1320 passengers and 907 crew boarded the magnificent vessel in a bid to journey to the new world. To commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Titanic's journey, Marriott Beijing & Tianjin International Hotels played host to a memorable charity gala dinner on Saturday, April 7. Over 195,000 RMB was raised and all the proceeds were donated to "Operation Smile" to repair cleft lips and cleft palates for 39 children and young adults throughout China. I was very interested in writing about this charitable event, so I volunteered to be the Ship's Wine Steward and I arrived early for a Martini at The Lounge bar, expertly prepared by Jasmine, Hao Li, and I

had a nice talk with Holly Shang about the upcoming event. Finishing my Martini, I joined my fellow "crewmembers" at Boarding Time at 5:30. Hans Loontjens, General Manager of Renaissance Beijing Capital Hotel, was appropriately uniformed as the Ship's Captain, complete with hat, as were my fellow collaborators Maxine Howe, Director of Marketing, Chanel Jiang, Director of Communications, Helen Tan, Director of Food & Beverage, and Mandy Sanh, Assistant Event Director. With a Dress Code of Cruise Elegant 1912, many of the guests arrived in period attire and hairstyles, which added a century old feeling to the ambiance. I was stunned by the magnificence of the decorations in the reception area, giving a feeling of entering a real ship, complete with port holes, red life rings, a huge artist's rendering of the Titanic, and a gangplank style entrance past the reception table. Directly ahead and against the back wall of the reception area were 4 elegantly dressed ladies playing chamber music in a String Quartet. On either side of them were stands displaying the Dinner Menu in Chinese and English. This was the same dinner served on April 14, 1912 in the First-class dining saloon of the R.M.S. Titanic and the price was \$124 USD per person 100 years ago, quite an expensive dinner in 1912 dollars. An original menu from the Titanic sold recently at auction for \$31,250 USD, but fortunately we did not have to pay that much to read our menus!

As expected, I enjoyed the Pre-Cruise Cocktail phase of the event while listening to the soothing chamber music. I was drinking a very refreshing sparkling wine from Jacob's Creek in Australia while several elegantly dressed waiters and waitresses walked amongst the revelers with trays of either tomato relish on toast, or raw oysters on the half shell. This was



Home

About

Mail



TITANIC
CHARITY GALA

MARRIOTT BEIJING &
TIANJIN INTERNATIONAL
HOTELS

RENAISSANCE BEIJING
CAPITAL HOTEL

★★★★★

Article: Randy Lee Svendsen Photos: by Don Cody and The Renaissance Beijing Capital Hotel

Randy Lee Svendsen from the United States is a resident of Beijing. A long-term devotee of "fine dining and wine", the Bon Vivant has also developed a refined taste in appreciating and collecting art, and he enjoys studying Chinese History and Language. Prompted by his passion toward the nectar and ambrosia, Randy performs reviews of hotel restaurants and resorts, returning prompt and insightful responses based on his personal experience and first hand information. Here, we would like to share with you Randy's latest experiences. He can be contacted at ransve@msn.com.

来自美国的Randy Lee Svendsen 现定居于北京。长久以来，热爱享受生活的Randy不仅对美酒佳肴情有独钟，而且在艺术品鉴赏和收藏方面也拥有不俗的品味。正是出于这种对珍馐美味的热爱，他一家一家地尝试《大酒店会员消费手册》中列出的特约酒店的餐厅、酒吧以及各类休闲场所，当然其中也有他自己的特别推荐，他会将中肯的意见及时反馈给《大酒店》。现在，我们将与您一起分享Randy Lee Svendsen先生的体验和感受。了解更多请联系ransve@msn.com。



the first course on the dinner menu and there were hundreds of oysters. It must have taken many people many hours to open them. I love oysters, which the waiters quickly figured out and they kept coming back to me time and again and we would laugh together as I would slide yet another oyster off the shell and into my mouth. By the end of the cocktail hour I think I had consumed about 25 of these deliciously fresh raw oysters, a perfect match for the cold sparkling wine or the 1421 Silver Chardonnay that was also being served. (The next day I ate 6 more oysters at Brunch in Tianjin!) At one end of the room the auction items were on display so I took a look at them while anticipating the money these items would raise for "Operation Smile". Following the reception, all doors to the Capital Ballroom opened simultaneously to the music from the movie Titanic. I walked into the huge room and was again stunned by the opulence of the decorations and ship-like appearance. Each of the 23 tables for 10 people had a uniformed staff member standing at attention facing the entrance, very elegant! Then I saw the big screen at the head of the room where the beginning of the movie Titanic was being shown and people were boarding the ship, which made me feel like I was there. I was fortunate to be seated at table 1 in the front of the room with Captain Hans Loontjens and his lovely wife Lily, and many other nice people. I

had a good talk with a nice young man, Lauro Leander Hildebrandt from Holland, who was assigned to look after our table. A very well dressed and mannered young professional, I am sure he will do very well in his career with Marriott. The dinner began with a glass of wine, either 1421 Silver Chardonnay or Cabernet Sauvignon from Xinjiang Province provided by 1421 Wines, one of the sponsors of this event. These wines were served throughout the evening. Sipping on my glass of Chardonnay I enjoyed the opening remarks by Hans Loontjens followed by a briefing by "Operation Smile" which began operations in 1982 and has helped children in 30 provinces in China so far. Next came the second course, Consommé Olga, Cream of Barley. This was a classic consommé with a few finely diced root vegetables, a good follow up to the oysters. The third course was Poached Salmon with Mousseline Sauce and Cucumbers. The mashed salmon under the



兰迪邮箱 Randy's Mail Box

sauce was mild but nicely flavored and the salmon on top was tender and cool. This dish was served cold and it was great with the light and fruity Chardonnay. Mia Wang topped up my wine while we talked about her being at this hotel only 3 months, coming from Dalian. She was most professional and pleasantly kept my wine glass full throughout the evening, which I greatly appreciated. Winnie Wang worked with Lauro and Mia to keep our table expertly served. We took a break in the action to listen to Allan Hao, Director of Sales & Marketing at Marriott Beijing City Wall, and Sharon Jin, Assistant Marcomm at Renaissance Beijing Capital Hotel, who were the MCs for the evening as they talked about the upcoming activities. As Ship's Wine Steward, I was invited to give a short speech about the 1421 wines being served and then pick the first 3 Lucky Draws. Interestingly, the first number I drew from the drum was 000001,

which resulted in the lucky winner receiving 2 bottles of 1421 wine. The fourth course arrived on a nice hot plate, Filet Mignons Lili with Vegetable Marrow Farci. With a slice of sautéed foie gras on top, the bacon wrapped filet of beef tenderloin was cooked a perfect medium, the way I like it. It was nicely flavored and the bacon, which was also cooked perfectly, made it wonderful! I ate it all in combination with the foie gras, which was simply delightful. I enjoyed this with the 1421 Cabernet Sauvignon, and with its medium tannins and smoky spice, it was a very satisfying combination with the meats. In addition to the 2 slices of white truffle on the plate, there was a 1-inch slice of potato, grilled to perfection, a half radish, and a small squash filled with bread stuffing, which I had never tasted before, but I loved it! This plate was 100 years old and still fabulous, my favorite dish of the evening! Some



things in life are timeless and this is one of them. Served in any century, when done right, this will always be fabulous. The fifth course was Roast Pigeon & Cress. The pigeon was rolled in skin and then sliced in 1-inch disks, 2 on the plate, with sautéed cress between them as a green vegetable accompaniment. There was a mild sauce, which I liked as a blender of the 2 major components, and I added a little ground sea salt to sparkle it up. A lot more sparkle was added to the evening by Miss China and her Runner-up, both of whom are stunningly beautiful. They participated in the fundraising live auction, which took place at this time, by walking to the tables to show off the jewelry being auctioned by wearing it. Needless to say, I enjoyed the show. I went back on stage to auction 2 bottles of 1421 Admiral's Reserve Chardonnay and Cabernet Sauvignon, then returned to my seat to enjoy the remaining auctions, which I appreciated with appropriate enthusiasm. Due

to this delightful distraction, I actually missed the sixth course of my dinner, Cold Asparagus Vinaigrette. When I snapped out of my trance I saw the asparagus being whisked away and being replaced by the seventh course, Pate de Foie Gras with Celery. The Celery was crossed on the plate for an interesting presentation and I loved this preparation of foie gras terrine in a little narrow necked jar with a thin layer of fat on top. I ate it with a little spoon that barely fit through the neck of the jar. It was great! A nice touch, and I enjoyed the medium bodied Cabernet Sauvignon with this dish too. I passed on the coffee being served at this time, preferring to stay with the wine and listen to the band that started performing after the auction was over. I had a good view of the dance floor and I enjoyed watching the revelers dancing to Latin Jazz and having fun. I had a nice talk with MC, Allan Hao, about the magnificence of the entire evening. Everything was so well done

and a lot of fun! The eighth course, dessert, was served, an assortment of Waldorf Pudding, Peaches in Chartreuse Jelly, Chocolate & Vanilla Éclairs, and French Ice Cream. It all looked so good! I attacked it in the order of flavor intensity that I expected from the look of things. Beginning with the Peaches in Chartreuse Jelly, it had fresh peach slices suspended in the jelly and I could clearly taste both the peaches and the Chartreuse liquor blended into the jelly. I liked it! Then I took some Waldorf Pudding and dragged it through the melting ice cream, which was rich and creamy and good. All my life I have loved éclairs, and this night I was delighted to be able to savor another one, which I also dragged through the melting ice cream. It was a classic éclair; delicious pastry stuffed with heavy whipped cream and on top was the well remembered and revered chocolate coating, wonderful! I was happy to be talking with a lot of people at the end of the dinner so my ice cream had mostly melted, but it was a good mix with the Waldorf Pudding and the Éclair. All in all, this was a first class event and a first class dinner. Hats off to the entire staff at Renaissance Beijing Capital Hotel for their excellent work and professionalism in making this happen. To have this fantastic dinner costing \$124 USD in 1912 for only 888 RMB, or \$140 USD in 2012 was a real deal, and it was real good!

I sat at the table for awhile, reluctant to leave. I had such a good time and the food, wine, and conversations were so delightful, I just didn't want to go home. I was rescued from my lament by the Captain, who invited me to join him and the crew for an after dinner drink. We proceeded to the bar and I ordered a stirred Bourbon Manhattan with a dash of bitters and a cherry. While sipping this cool and refreshing



classic cocktail, we talked about the entire evening and, as a result of the proceeds from this event, the happiness the many children and their families will receive from the skills and generosity of the doctors at "Operation Smile". As we gradually regained our true identities, I thanked Hans Loontjens for inviting me to this memorable event and wished everyone a good night. Immersing from this historical fantasy, I re-entered reality as I strolled happily into the night.

CHEERS!

My Best as Always,

Randy

