

DINE DIVINE

Fine dining spots you'll love

BIG EASY BAR AND GRILL, THE ELS CLUB

WHAT IS IT: Casual, laidback dining in a classic steakhouse setting.

WHY WE LOVE IT: Boy, did I learn a lot dining at The Big Easy Bar and Grill. First up, that Ernie Els' – the South African golfing legend behind the club – nickname is 'The Big Easy', hence the restaurant's name. Yes, golf fans might be rolling their eyes at me right now, but I didn't know. Secondly, I learnt a ton about steaks and grapes from the gregarious restaurant manager, Tobias, who was quite the most enthusiastic, sociable and knowledgeable man I have ever come across. If Tobias ever has a dinner party, I want to be invited!

With its dark, wood-panelled décor, the Big Easy Bar and Grill sets a laid back tone as an eatery, and on the Thursday night we went, the place was filled with family groups, couples and golfers grabbing a bite post-game. The menu is unpretentious, and deceptively simple, and we got stuck right into starters of baked brie, snoek and crab cakes, and seared scallops – that's right, three starters between the two of us, we were hungry! The juicy and tender scallops came wrapped in duck prosciutto and cooked in butter and herbs and saffron aioli, while the hearty pan-seared crab cakes were complemented with a corn and spiced mango cilantro sauce. The brie was huge, oozing out onto the plate with each cut, to be smeared on the crusty baguette and topped with blackberries. Elsewhere on the menu, you'll find plenty of South African classics which have become global favourites – including Boerwors in a thick tomato onion stew and Bobotie samosas with banana chutney and coconut shavings.

For mains, there are plenty of seafood options, such as grilled jumbo prawns, pan seared sea bass and Norwegian salmon steak, and meats are well represented with the cinnamon and spice flavoured lamb stew in baked Portuguese bread, New Zealand red deer fillet and the intriguingly named angry duck curry that we're definitely going to try next time. But, c'mon, it's a Thursday night, we wanted to have steak, Tobias wanted us to have steak... Heck, probably even Mr Els wanted us to have steak – we were going to have steak!

I opted for the 8oz U.S. beef grilled tenderloin, while my husband went for the 12oz South African rib-eye, along with the suggested beverages to accompany. For our choice of sides, we went big, we did not go home, and got stuck into the aptly named mother of all baked potatoes, Big Easy fries, sautéed baby spinach, mushrooms sautéed in cream and seasoned with fresh herbs and steamed broccoli. Does it sound like we over-ordered? Well, the joke is on you, because we polished off the lot! The steaks were delicious – tender, juicy, cooked to perfection – while the sides were super-generous (the potato could easily pass for a starter) and super-tasty. It's also worth noting here that we were very impressed with the quality of the kids' menu which featured options that were not only healthy, but also a veritable taste exploration for little ones, with a 3oz fillet mignon, salmon fillet with green beans and grilled chicken with broccoli among others. As a mum who hides the fries from my kids, I really appreciated the options.

Where were we? Ah, yes, dessert, which I had to tackle alone due to husband's aforementioned 12oz steak. I chose the warm apple pie because the description contained two of my three dessert trigger words – 'caramel' and 'fudge' (the other is 'toffee' if you're taking notes). Of course, it was delish, with apple both soft and crunchy, and generous drizzles of caramel cinnamon fudge, making for a brilliantly sweet end to a relaxed and fun meal.

WHAT TO WEAR: Keep things smart-casual.

WHO TO TAKE: Friends and family, the little ones, your man... Big Easy Bar and Grill is perfect for all. **OK!**

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We highly recommend the steaks in this laidback eatery, and for dessert, the warm apple pie (below)

