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Life *this week*

DINING REVIEW

Perfect night: Dinner and sail aboard *Aurora*

BY PORTIA LITTLE

Who hasn't admired the large sailboat with the red sails out on Newport harbor and longed to go out on it?

It's actually possible to indulge this fantasy by taking a sunset sail on the schooner *Aurora*, following a lobster dinner. This event, which takes place on Sundays, Wednesdays and Thursdays in the City by the Sea, has in fact been so popular that it will be extended right through September.

We headed over to the Goat Island Marina on a recent sunny Wednesday and strolled to the Regatta Place alfresco dining area. My dining companion ordered drinks at the cash bar, which we lingered over while taking in the panorama of the Newport skyline.

Although we were in no hurry, our server brought our meals promptly — large wooden bowls, each heaped with a 1 1/4-pound boiled lobster, steamed mussels, drawn butter, roasted potatoes, and a large ear of sweet corn — ah, the pleasures of summer. Newport Experience, sponsors of the dinner sail, also offer alternative menu options of barbecued chicken, a portabella mushroom entrée with couscous, and a children's choice of chicken fingers and fries.

The dining area was filled with an enthusiastic crowd that included couples, parents with children, seniors, and a large group celebrating a birthday. One couple from New York noted that they'd seen the *Aurora* at their son's wedding a few months ago, and had returned to sail on it.

Finally it was time for the long-anticipated boat boarding. We walked up the gangplank onto the majestic 101-foot schooner, which can accommodate up to 80 passengers, and is 68 years young. The



The distinctive schooner *Aurora* under sail in lower Narragansett Bay. What could be better than a lobster dinner followed by a sail under her red canvas?

captain, who has sailed around the world, greeted us, and explained the teamwork of the crew in raising the deep red sails, which we had so often watched from shore.

We relaxed as the boat drifted away from port under warm ocean breezes, with a seascape of white cloud ribbons against a pale blue early evening sky.

During the 1 1/2-hour sail, some passengers chatted quietly while others just admired the gorgeous scenery. Each sight seemed more spectacular than the last. Sailing west into the sunset, we passed by Fort Adams, the Newport bridge, Rose Island lighthouse, and the house on the rock — all familiar landmarks, which seemed more magical when viewed from this Tall Ship. As dusk approached, we contemplated the magnificent iridescent red sunset over the Jamestown tree line, a scene made even more dramatic as a passing sailboat's dark masts stood out before the harbor's pink haze.

As dusk descended, we headed back, taking photos of the bridge and some gulls on the Rose Island beach. Lights now twinkled along the shore and on nearby boats.

It was a life of leisure for an evening. Pass the pleasure, please.



Dockside New England lobster boil and sunset sail on schooner *Aurora*

MENU: Lobster dinner with mussels, roasted potatoes and corn. Other menu choices include chicken, vegetarian, children's chicken fingers and fries.

WHERE: Regatta Place at Goat Island Marina

HOURS: Dinner from 5 to 6:30 p.m. *Aurora* sails from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Sundays, Wednesdays and Thursdays through September. Dinner will follow sail from mid-September on.

PRICE/INFO: \$36.95 per person plus service and tax. Reservations required at 849-6683, ext. 0, or go to www.newportexperience.com



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