

Suddenly finding myself with my first weekend off all summer, as I finally hung up Lady Bracknell's corset at the Abbey Theatre, the thought of the West entered my mind and, like moths to a flame, Maeve and I were off to Galway to chill out and remove the wrinkles at the wonderful Radisson Hotel. Having pampered and purified ourselves in the spa and pool, thoughts of dinner arose. I chose the famous and still-unspoilt location of Donnelly's of Barna.

Barna was once a tiny village on the way to the far West - it is now a burgeoning suburb of Galway City. But Donnelly's Seafood Bar changes not a bit.

It remains a perfect example of the traditional Irish bar. It is full of snugs and cosy corners, mix-and-match furnishings, quaint décor and tourists. There is a restaurant area at the back, but we decided to sit in the bar to eat.

The menu is the same throughout the establishment and the bar has a nice atmosphere. Starters include crab and potato cake, smoked salmon and crab creation, ragout of mussels, crab claws in a Pernod and garlic butter sauce, and Rossaveal Prawns. The main dishes are mainly fish, although there is steak and chicken to be had. The fish list tempts you with regular offerings of mussels, sea bass, haddock mornay, plaice farci, salmon, trout, swordfish, baked cod and scallops.

The starters average €10.50 and are of a very generous portion while the main dishes, averaging €17, are fantastic value for money. The wine list is not overly imaginative but it is reasonable enough. We settled on a Chardonnay Wolf Blass.

Maeve took the crab claws to start and the baked fillet of hake with garlic and herb crust to follow. I went for the Rossaveal Prawns as my starter and the haddock mornay as my main dish. With these, a choice of salad or vegetables and baked or chipped potatoes is included. We took the baked spuds and the vegetables as well as a small side salad.

First to arrive at the table was a big jug of iced water - no pretensions here - then a basket of doorsteps-sized slabs of some of the nicest brown bread to be had that side of the Shannon.

The prawns were big and chunky and the sauce very good, if a little heavy on the vinaigrette. The crab claws - and there were many - were truly delightful and were finished off by the pair of us lapping up the remaining butter dressing with more of the bread. Rustic delight!

Both main dishes had much to recommend them. The hake, cooked perhaps just a trifle too long, was topped by a simple and well-balanced herb and garlic crust that did not impose on the fish but, rather, enhanced it. The haddock contained a huge amount of smoked fish in a rich Mornay sauce served on a pastry bed. It was perfect comfort eating, almost a fish pie. The vegetables were cooked crunchy and the big fluffy flowery baked potato served with sour cream. We were replete.

There are desserts on offer, including the ever-present tiramisu, homemade ice creams and cheeses. We simply didn't have room for them. Settling for some coffee, we beat a satisfied retreat back to the hotel for a digestif. Our dinner for two with wine and coffee came to a very acceptable €79.05. It was well worth the pilgrimage to Galway

Style: Classic Irish seafood

The Look: Classic Irish Bar

Clientele: Local and Tourists

Cost per person: €25 - €30 (without wine)

Ambience	5/5
Cuisine	4/5
Service	3/5
Value	4/5