

I encourage you to utilize your social media skills and share this info with like-minded souls. Dinner is always better with friends and the Cru Dinner is a not-to-be-missed introduction to the ACPT.

If you have a blog, thanks in advance for letting your fans know about the Cru Dinner.

We're back for number XXII!

That's right, number XXII because everyone knows crossword people love nothing more than a good Roman numeral.

What: Reserve **NOW** for the **ACPT 2020 Friday Night Cru Dinner**

When: Friday, March 20, 2020 from 6 PM to 8 PM

Where: Sam's American Bistro, the hotel restaurant conveniently located on the lobby level of the Stamford Marriott, to the left of the main bar.

This may be the 43rd edition of the ACPT but more importantly, the 22nd edition of the ACPT's crown jewel, the Cru Dinner, where civility reigns and one can properly prepare oneself for the humiliation that lies ahead.

Yes, Stamford is home base and in a few short weeks, the Cru Dinner will once again officially kick off the annual ACPT pilgrimage in the style to which many of us have grown accustomed. For those who are unfamiliar with this annual gathering, it began in 1999 as an opportunity for crossword obsessives (solvers, constructors, bloggers, lurkers) to break bread prior to the tournament. And the tradition continues.

If this brief overview of the Cru Dinner leaves you wanting more info, please take a look at an interview I did with NY Times Wordplay Blog helmswoman, Deb Amlen in 2013. It's way more information than you need and probably won't help you in the competition but it may enable first timers to enter with the swagger of a veteran.

Just Click or copy and paste the link below.

<http://wordplay.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/03/07/a-c-p-t-2013-how-to-have-fun/>

Nuts & Bolts Dept.

How Much for 2020?

As you might imagine, creating the Cru Dinner each year is an arduous task necessitating the existence of a massive, hyper-corporate and highly structured management entity. Yet, despite our bloated, top-heavy bureaucracy, we are happy to announce that the price this year will REMAIN a mere \$41 per person, **including** tax and tip. Before entering Sam's Restaurant, those staying at the Marriott will sign a form so the dinner can be charged to your room. Anyone attending the dinner but not staying at the hotel can pay in cash (bring exact please) and the Marriott will provide you with a receipt if you wish. Or you can, make an arrangement to pay a friend and have your meal charged to that friend's room.

Cru Dinner Menu 2020

Served Buffet Style continuously from 6 PM to 8 PM

Bruschetta

Roma Tomato, Basil, and Mozzarella Cheese
Tuscan White Beans, Rosemary and Garlic
Black Olive Tapenade
served with Toasted Herb Focaccia and Crostini

Candied Sliced Roast Turkey Breast

served with Mini Whole Grain Rolls
Homemade Spicy Dijon Mustard on the side

Penne Pasta with Roasted Baby Vegetables (Vegan)

Sauteed in Extra Virgin Olive Oil and Poached Eggplant Garlic
Salt, Pepper, and Hot Pepper Flakes served on the side
Cheese Toppings will be available and served on the side

Salad Bar

Romaine Greens, Cucumbers, Peppers, Onions, Carrots, Tabbouleh, Couscous, Sprouts and Seeds
A selection of 3 Dressings and Croutons on the side

An Assortment of Mini Cannoli and Sliced, Fresh Fruit

Regular Soda, Diet Soda, Regular Coffee, Decaf Coffee, and Tea

Adult Beverages may be purchased at the adjacent bar.

\$41.00 per person including tax and tip.

Admittance to the Cru Dinner will be by **reservation only** as the room can accommodate a little over 80 people comfortably. Reservations will be closed at that point. As most regulars know, we generally sell out so if you're planning to be there this March for our 22th iteration, let me know as soon as possible!

The Cru Dinner will be buffet style and as a result of our enormous power and influence, we have once again (gently) commandeered the entire restaurant for our gathering. It is a restaurant, so tables and chairs abound and there is no formal seating, but if you'd like to sit with those you know (parties of 5 or more, up to 8), make those arrangements beforehand and inform me of **all who are in your group AND who the group 'leader' is** (via email – alpernm@aol.com) when you make your individual reservation. Also, we are adjacent to the main bar and once stickered (see below*), you are encouraged to free roam.

*Upon checking in to the dinner on Friday night, you will receive an official name/entrance sticker bearing an uncanny likeness to Mr. Happy Pencil.

We will have a wait staff person (or two) attending to our buffet so that no matter when you arrive between 6 and 8, everything on the menu will be available. Before you leave for the evening's activities, I'll ask everyone in attendance to throw a dollar or two into a hat to thank our servers for what I expect will once again be excellent service.

OK. You got me. How do I sign up?

Reservations can be made simply by emailing me (alpernm@aol.com)

the (1) number, (2) names, and (3) email addresses

of those who will be attending

with CRU DINNER in the subject line.

If you're part of a group (5 or more) or a group 'leader', let me know that. And if you're an ACPT rookie and/or a Cru Dinner rookie, let me know that also.

All attendees will receive an email confirmation.

As stated above, we are limited to a maximum of about 80 people so please **do not wait** until the last minute. We anticipate 2020 will once again be a sell-out.

FAQs

What is the "CRU"?

Essentially, anyone who ever contributed in any way to the old NY Times Crossword Puzzle Forum or the many successor venues. It's a big tent and if you'll be attending this year's edition of the ACPT, you're in the CRU.

Do I have to register for the tournament to attend the Cru Dinner?

No, but your dinner must be charged to a room if you're staying in the Marriott or paid in cash (exact please) if you're not.

If I get held up in traffic and don't arrive until after 7, will I still eat?

Yes. Everything on the menu will be replenished regularly and available for the entire 2 hours.

This is my first tournament and I'm afraid I'll feel out of place at a dinner where everyone knows everyone else.

About 30% of 2020 Cru Dinner attendees will be first timers, a distribution that has traditionally worked best for everyone. Feelings of unease will disappear in 5 minutes. Maybe quicker. Guaranteed! Remember, every veteran was once a rookie.

Will I have time to get to the Friday evening program and wine and cheese reception?

Those venues are just across the lobby. There will be plenty of time. And Will may even stop in to the Cru Dinner following his Judges' Dinner so when he leaves for the evening's activities, that will be your cue.

What if I have any other questions? Email me: alpernm@aol.com

I look forward to seeing you on March 20. And good luck if you're competing!

Mike Alpern

(alpernm@aol.com)