

DINING

Enjoy a taste of your favorite restaurants at 'Culinary Extravaganza'

If you've been wanting to try a new restaurant, chances are pretty good they'll be among the 60 restaurants offering tastes of their specialty dishes at Schoolcraft College Sunday, Sept. 20 during Culinary Extravaganza VII.

The event includes delicious food samples, a live auction, and free mini-seminars on food-related topics, including demonstrations of healthy, low-calorie meals by a chef from the Weight Watchers Group, whose president, Florine Mark, is the event's honorary chair.

Old Mexico with restaurants in Livonia and West Bloomfield, and Cascaades, a restaurant inside the Embassy Suites in Livonia, are among the participants.

Restaurant owners Vicki and Ramon Castaneda have been participating in Schoolcraft's Culinary Extravaganza for quite awhile. "I love it because every one is so friendly," said Ramon. "You meet all kinds of people, and sometimes catch some new customers."

Their son, Tim, who manages Old Mexico in West Bloomfield, enjoys "seeing all the people who doesn't get to see throughout the year, because everyone is working. You get to see what every one else is doing."

Even though it's work, Vicki says, "it's fun work. It's very well organized. You feel like they want you there."

Open since Dec. 16, 1976 in Livonia, Old Mexico opened a second restaurant in West Bloomfield on May 17, 1986. The menus at the two restaurants are similar, but you'll find more upscale menu, and seafood dishes at the West Bloomfield restaurant, which also offers entertainment on weekends. "Our customers in West Bloomfield have traveled to Mexico, and want something a little different," said Ramon.

Mexican favorites, with attention to quality and freshness,

Schoolcraft College Culinary Extravaganza VII
When: 2-5 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 20, in the Waterman Center, on campus 18600 Haggerty Road (between Six and Seven Mile Roads, just west of I-275), Livonia.

Admission: Culinary Extravaganza VII tickets are \$40 per person or two tickets for \$75. Raffle tickets are \$5 each or three for \$10. Both can be purchased by calling the Office of Marketing and Development at (734) 462-4417. Visa, MasterCard, Discover credit cards and checks are accepted. Sponsors are being sought. Sponsorships range from \$250 to \$5,000. For information about participating in Culinary Extravaganza VII, or being a sponsor, call (734) 462-4417. Event proceeds benefit student scholarships.

Highlights:
■ Approximately 60 of the

premier restaurants of southeastern Michigan will offer tastes of their specialty dishes.

■ A live auction features combination prizes and a raffle with two round-trip tickets to anywhere in the continental U.S. or a trip to Las Vegas.

■ There will be free mini-seminars on food-related topics, including demonstrations of healthy, low-calorie meals by a chef from the Weight Watchers Group, whose president, Florine Mark, is the event's honorary chair.

■ Raffle prizes include two round-trip tickets on Northwest Airlines to anywhere in the contiguous U.S. where Northwest flies; a Las Vegas trip for two; the lease of a new Saturn for three months; and a lady's 14-karat ring with an Iolite stone and five small diamonds.

make Old Mexico Restaurants consistently good.

"We travel all over Mexico looking for new ideas," said Vicki. "I go in the hotel kitchens. We're always looking for new ideas no matter where we are."

Old Mexico will be serving ground beef soft tacos at the Culinary Extravaganza.

Cascaades Restaurant inside the Embassy Suites is not for guests only. A tropical paradise, no matter what the season, Cascaades is inside a five story tropical atrium with two cascading waterfalls, surrounded by a stream. There are plants galore, and fish inside the pond.

Tim Kelly, director of catering, has served on the Culinary Extravaganza committee for three years. "It's great for the local community, and gives a lot of people a taste of what's going on, and helps Schoolcraft reach their goal of giving out scholarships," said Kelly.



STAFF PHOTO BY TOM HAWLEY

Taste of Mexico: Vicki and Ramon Castaneda of Old Mexico Restaurants present a botana, just one of the many items you'll find on the menu at their restaurants in West Bloomfield and Livonia. They are among the many restaurants participating in Culinary Extravaganza VII at Schoolcraft College on Sept. 20.

Old Mexico Restaurants

Two locations:
■ West Bloomfield - 5566 Drake Road (corner of Walnut Lake Road), (248) 663-8088.

Open: 5-10 p.m. Monday-Thursday; noon to 11 p.m. Friday, 5-11 p.m. Saturday, Closed Sunday.

Entertainment: 7-11 p.m. Friday-Saturday

Seats: 120

Reservations: Parties of 10 or more

■ Livonia - 28407 Five Mile Road (between Inkster and Middlebelt), (734) 423-3310

Open: 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 10:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Closed Sunday.

Seats: 50

Pen Seared Crab Cakes, soups, salads, and sandwiches. Menu items are moderately priced with dinner entrees ranging from \$13.95 to \$19.95. Open Grille, offered 5-10 p.m. Monday-Saturday, allows customers to choose from a selection of steaks and seafood. Each item is grilled

to your liking by the chefs at Cascaades.

"People find they can relax and take their time, and enjoy themselves," said restaurant manager Julie Bonbion of Farmington Hills. "Our chefs are very accommodating. If there's a special request, or dietary restriction let them know."

Here's what you can look forward to at Culinary Extravaganza: From the Capital Grille, baby

lobster bisque from the Michigan Star Clipper Dinner Train, or fresh fettuccini Alfredo from DaVinci's in the Novi Hilton. The fish course includes rock shrimp chive and roasted tomato risotto from Southfield's Golden Mushroom or rock shrimp with basil in puff pastry from Excalibur. Elk and wild mushroom ragout from the Local Core Brewing Company in Novi, marinated grilled chicken with corn salad from Pike Street in Pontiac.

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Chicken Stir Fry (served over Rice) \$5.95
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