

# Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/444-1100



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## Restaurants say 'Happy Birthday'

By Ethel Simmons  
staff writer

**H**APPY BIRTHDAY! Whether your birthday's in January or February, you can celebrate with flair when the occasion arrives, with some complimentary offerings from suburban Detroit restaurants.

We're all familiar with the birthday dinner where the guest of honor is feted in a restaurant. After the meal, surprise, surprise, a small birthday cake with a candle is brought to the table and a cluster of waitresses and staff sing the greeting.

Usually, the cake's a small one, topped with a single candle, and it's often a freebie provided by the restaurant. Of course, there are variations on this theme, ranging from Alfred's in Troy, which offers a free meal, cake and framed photograph of the birthday celebrant, to the Roman Terrace in Farmington Hills, which provides a complimentary split of champagne.

Here are some details on who's giving what, and how you can arrange for the fun. In most cases, just a whispered word to the host/hostess on arrival, or to the waiter/waitress at the table is enough to have the birthday cake show up at the right time.

**A**LOWENSTEIN, owner of Alfred's at Somerset Mall, Troy (phone 843-8855), said of the free cake, dinner and photo, "We've been offering that for years. Many people come back every year on their birthday."

As at many of the restaurants offering free cakes, the little cake at Alfred's reads a simple, "Best Wishes." This also makes the cakes suitable for anniversary parties, but that's another story.

### table talk

At the Roman Terrace and its neighboring McFreck's Saloon and Gathering Place, 27521 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills (855-5860), cakes are avoided entirely. The restaurant, as mentioned, gives free champagne and, manager Diane Debold said, in the saloon "boonies gets a big 'boomah' glass (3 ounces) of the cocktail of his or her choice."

Bill Knapp's family restaurants have one of the most elaborate programs for celebrating birthdays. At Bill Knapp's, 1639 Laurel Road, Oak Lawn (645-1816), manager Barb Bianchi explained the choices. For children age 10 and under, there's a free Children's Birthday Club. Youngsters who fill out a registration card in advance at the restaurant will receive a card in the mail on their birthday. On any child's birthday, free cake and 10 dishes of ice cream will be served free to the party.

The cake is a chocolate layer cake, although white cake is available on request. The candleholder is a birthday chef, with a candle sticking out of the chef's hat.

"THE ADULT Birthday Club is for age 11 and older," Bianchi said. "They come in on the day of their birthday and receive their age percentage off their birthday check." Presumably, a 100-year-old receives a free meal, but even 50-year-olds get half off.

At Bloofield Charles's family tavern, 8558 W. Maple, West Bloomfield (855-2244), instead of a cake, birthday celebrants get a free hot apple mountain sundae. "It's one of our trademark

desserts," manager Craig Cassidy said. The sundae is served with a candle in it and five or six employees "sing our little jingle." Cassidy recalled it:

"We'd like to take a minute,  
We have one thing to say,  
The best of luck and happiness on this important day."

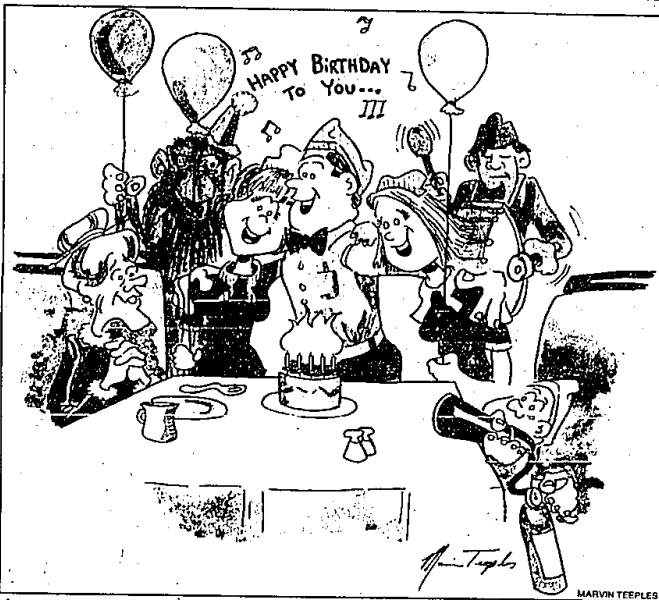
"We have about 10 of them a night," he said about the birthday parties requesting the sundae. Sometime one party will see the celebration and ask for the same.

At Machus Red Fox, flagship restaurant in the Machus group at 6870 Telegraph, Bloomfield Township (526-4200), the birthday guest may receive a three-inch cake, frosted and decorated with the message, "Best Wishes," general manager David Page said. "Generally, we don't charge for them, but that doesn't mean they're not expensive."

"PEOPLE USUALLY call ahead, or one person lags behind and says, 'There's a birthday at our table. A helpful hint: Who is the birthday for and their name?' That way, the cake can come to the right person and their name be sung in the 'Happy Birthday' song."

"Usually, four or five people sing. I have to be in singing near the end because of the high note, singing, with four sopranos."

Birthday dinners also may include a cake specially ordered from the Machus Bakeries — although this is not a freebie. "A party of eight may order



a special cake through the bakery,"

Page said. "They tell the bakery when the reservation time is and have the bakery contact us. The cost of the cake is added to the guest check," Page said.

At Molly McGuire's, 34390 Ford Road, Westland (734-7490), a little round cake with a candle or two is served without charge to birthday parties.

"We prefer they call ahead of time if they want it to be a surprise, or they can ask when they check in at the host

stand," said Ken Lux, one of the owners.

At Jim Mather's Mr. Steak, in the moderately priced restaurant chain, at 44401 Ford Road, Canton (981-1048), manager Robert McWatt said, "We offer on the day of the birthday a substantial discount of \$5.95 on any dinner entree."

AT THE ELEGANT Jacques's Sea Food and its companion, J.T.'s cafe,

30100 Telegraph, Bingham Farms (642-1373), manager Lynn Hayes said, "Our policy is, as a surprise, that we bring our most popular-selling torte, autumn leaves chocolate mousse torte, served with a candle in it."

"If the birthday is not a surprise, they get their choice of anything off the pastry cart, compliments of the restaurant."

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