



## A dish fit for Le Gala de Cuisine



STEPHEN CANTRELL/staff photographer

Rik Halberg of R.I.K.'s Total Cuisine Center at Bloomfield Plaza in Bloomfield Township displays the ingredients that go into frutta di mare, an Italian seafood stew he will prepare at Le Gala de Cuisine. Monkfish and shellfish

combine with red peppers, onions and tomatoes for the delicious dish that will be served in the Great Hall at Cranbrook Kingswood School.

By Ethel Simmons  
staff writer

R.I.K.'s Total Cuisine Center in Bloomfield Township does hundreds of parties each year, but one of the events owner Rik Halberg and his gourmet carry-out and catering-service staff look forward to the most is Le Gala de Cuisine.

This lavish, springtime party at Cranbrook Kingswood School in Bloomfield Hills is also sponsored by the Michigan Chefs de Cuisine Association and features the finest in foods, from appetizers to desserts.

The annual benefit for Cranbrook Kingswood School will be held 3-7 p.m. Sunday at the school's Elle Saarinen-designed Quadrangle. Halberg, who will be participating for the fifth time, has selected frutta di mare (fruits of the sea) for the dish he and his co-workers will prepare.

Asked why he selected frutta di mare — an Italian version of bouillabaisse, served like a stew, Halberg said, "You want something sophisticated that people are going to like and has a lot of flavor."

NOT ONLY IS FRUITA DI MARE tasty, but it is extremely eye-catching. First, colorful red peppers join olive oil, onions and garlic in the frypan. Then more bright accent comes from tomatoes before a fish or chicken stock is added to boil down.

"Other than the expense of the seafood, this is a fast, easy dish to make," Halberg said, as he stirred his frypan in the open kitchen at R.I.K.'s. He was putting together four to six portions of the dish that will be served in quantity, to 500 guests, at Le Gala.

"The seafood is added last," he said. Clams, mussels, sea scallops, shrimp and monkfish cut into cubes went into the pan. Halberg gets all his seafood from Superior Fish in Royal Oak. His vegetables come from the Eastern Market in Detroit.

A strip of orange peel will be removed from the frypan before the seafood stew is served. A pinch of saffron is an essential ingredient. "The saffron gives a mellow, musty flavor. It gives kind of a golden color," Halberg said.

At Le Gala, Rik's contribution will be among the entrees offered in the Great Hall, the dining room inside one of the school buildings. Appetizers are served in individual school-rooms and halls and out-of-doors before guests proceed to the Great Hall.

DESSERTS AND coffee are served outdoors, where tents protect against the elements (rain seldom darkens Le Gala). Wine and other drinks are available at many locations.



Mussels, littleneck clams, sea scallops and shrimp lend color and variety to a platter of frutta di mare. Here shown in a serving for four to six, the dish will be prepared for 500 guests at Le Gala de Cuisine. The sauce will be brought to the site, and the seafood will be cooked in a frying pan and served with the sauce from chafing dishes.

**'You want something sophisticated that people are going to like and has a lot of flavor.'**

— Rik Halberg

"With us, everybody wants to go," Halberg said of his cuisine-center staff. He and chef Ken Fink will prepare frutta di mare at Le Gala.

Halberg said he didn't know exactly how many pounds of seafood he would be serving but estimated "several thousand shellfish." He will make the sauce earlier that day and transport it to Le Gala, along with the fish to be iced down at the site. The seafood will be cooked at the party and served from chafing dishes.

Halberg is especially fond of Italian cooking. "I just got back from Italy. I will be taking a group to Italy on an eating tour. I love Italian food."

"This was my second trip to Italy. I visited some of the best restaurants." He is planning a two-week trip — which he will sell through the store — to northern Italy.

HALBERG FIRST participated in Le Gala when he was working as a chef at the Holly Hotel. The next

year, he represented R.I.K.'s. General admission to Le Gala is \$125. Patrons contribute \$190, benefactors \$200. In addition to food and beverages, each guest receives a spiral-bound cookbook containing recipes from chefs at the culinary event.

The recipes don't necessarily match up with the dishes being presented that day, but Halberg has chosen his recipe for frutta di mare for inclusion. After a taste of his specialty, Le Gala-goers may want to prepare the Italian stew at home sometime.

Halberg started out in the health food business in Arizona. He ran two vegetarian restaurants there and also grew and manufactured food.

After attending the Culinary Institute in New York, he worked at a restaurant in High Park with one of the developers of new American cuisine.

He got out of the health-food business because of, in a word, "economics," he said. At R.I.K.'s, the emphasis is on greater variety and what he describes not as health food but as "healthier food. We try to offer everything."

Frutta di mare fits the requirements. "It's low in fat and calories." At Le Gala, more than 44 chefs from Detroit-area restaurants and country clubs will take part.

For ticket information call 645-3134.

**The Fabulous Norma Jean Bell and the All-Stars - Now Appearing Wed. - Sat.**

**ALONG WITH**

- no cover for women Wed. Nights
- complimentary hot & cold Hors d'oeuvres
- Thurs. no cover until 10:30
- reduced drink prices M-F 5:00-8:30

**STOP BY...** Make Hurler's along with Norma Jean Bell and the All-Stars a part of your entertainment pleasure.

**HURLEY'S**  
NORTHFIELD HILTON  
CROOKS at 1-75  
879-2100

### Distinctive Dining

Indulge yourself with an exceptional dining experience at the Benchmark.

The elegant decor serves as a dramatic backdrop for superb continental cuisine, fine wines, soft music, tempting desserts and impeccable service.

Cocktail and dinner service available Monday through Saturday, beginning at 6 p.m.

Call 559-6500 for reservations.

*the*  
**Benchmark**

16400 J.L. Hudson Drive, Southfield, Michigan 48034

### Mother's Day Sunday Brunch at the Troy Hilton

Sunday, May 10  
10 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Join us in the Gordon Ballroom for our Mother's Day Brunch featuring an assortment of hot and cold favorites. Each mother will receive a complimentary rose and a gift certificate to join us again for brunch.

Adults \$12.95 • Seniors \$11.95  
Children 3-12 \$7.95  
Under 3 years - Complimentary

Reservations 583-9000

1455 Stephenson Hwy. • Troy, Michigan 48064