

## Diners enjoy, students learn

By Larry Jones  
special writer

How many times have you heard the old expression, "Let's do lunch," only to have the commitment fade away because burgers in a box were too cheap and fast and the cost of a table for two at a swanky suburban restaurant equaled last month's phone bill?

Never fear, because if you're looking for food, great food, well-prepared food, food with style and consistent quality, let alone below-market prices — check out the local school scene and find out what culinary artists are doing in the Observer & Eccentric area.

North, east, south and west, the culinary arts programs featured at our learning institutions are by far the best.

Homemade soups. The kind Momma used to make, most of them from scratch. Entrees that have the students learning as much about ethnic cuisine as George Schultz on a Middle-Eastern fact-finding trip. Desserts brimming with the likes of fresh cream, shaved chocolate with crusts so light and flaky they must have been made by little old ladies who still wear curlers and babushkas. Hardly.

TODAY'S STUDENT of culinary arts not only is being introduced to the high-tech art of culinary trends and happenings but also receiving a full-fledged background in kitchen management, personnel, public relations, purchasing and everything that has to do with the likes of running a restaurant in our "let's dine out" society.

With the trend to dine out becoming more prevalent, industry statistics show that the food service industry will be one of the fastest-growing occupations.

Students graduating at the top of their classes are being offered positions on a nationwide basis. A two-year associate degree in culinary arts from a top-rated institution with a renowned program has rookie chefs easily breaking the \$20,000-per-year mark, and top achievers being lured to restaurants both near and out-of-state with perks like major medical, artistic freedom, cars and condos. We're playing in the major leagues here, folks.

Good chefs with experience and good reputations are as hard to find as Black Angus Beef, but once you've known the difference, you won't want the basics again.

This isn't to say that all good chefs herald from a classy college with lots of degrees. Anticipating the trend to vocational education, most local school districts allow high school students

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a chance to see what the real working world is all about. Schools offer a commercial foods course that gives our teen-agers an in-depth look at running a restaurant, from both the front of the house (dining room) all the way down to the basement where supplies are stored.

ADD TO THIS a professional cast of some of the best-known culinary creators to supervise a kitchen, and you have a lucrative alternative to what used to be a "sit-at-your-desk-and-do-this" learning program.

High school students participating in the commercial foods class can get hands-on experience, like cutting a side of beef or learning to perform ice carvings with a high-powered chain saw. Spin-sugar desserts and quantity baking, along with all the aspects of running a restaurant as a business, are now covered — in high school.

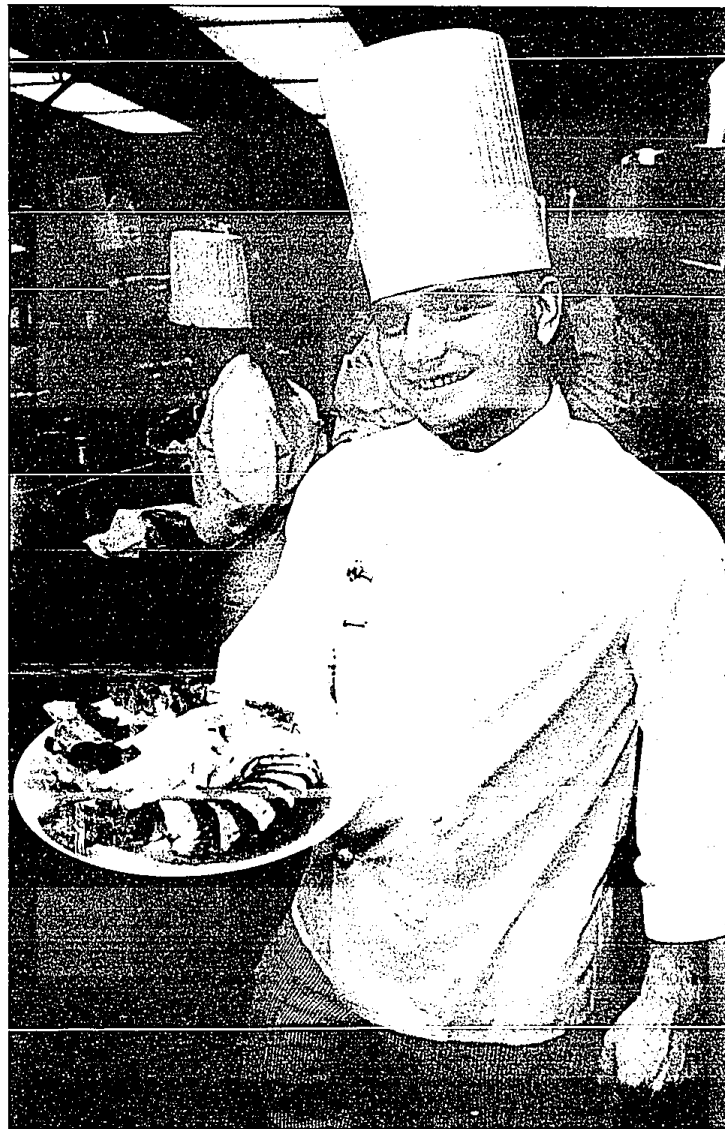
Some school districts are even getting on the bandwagon and offering their commercial foods program to evening school participants as a credited program.

Enough of the background information. Let's get down to what these programs do best — food.

Recent visits to all the programs mentioned in the restaurant list, on this page, had me sampling the wares of junior chefs with such exemplary fare as Poached Eggs Blackstone, a minestrone that would have brought Pavarotti to his knees, even table-side preparation featuring a flaming Steak Diane.

IF YOU ARE worried that your taste buds would never appreciate the likes of Shrimps Provencal, all the programs offer outrageous sandwiches like a hot ham and cheese on grilled sourdough, homemade fries, even a not-so-basic plate called "Beth's Tuna Supreme" that has pita bread stuffed with the freshest tuna salad, lettuce and tomatoes. At \$1.50 yet. Can you believe it?

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STEVE FECHT/staff photographer

Student assistant Richard Willerer of West Bloomfield displays the Pork and Pear Salad that is a specialty at the American Harvest restaurant, open to the public for lunch prepared by the culinary arts department at Schoolcraft College in Livonia.

## Salad combines pork with pear

SCHOOLCRAFT COLLEGE'S  
PORK AND PEAR SALAD WITH ORANGE VINAIGRETTE

8 red leaf lettuce leaves  
watercress (to garnish)  
salt and white pepper to taste

2 lbs. trimmed pork tenderloin  
2 cups Hoisin sauce (available at specialty food stores)  
1 teaspoon Cajun spice mix  
8 fresh pears, peeled and sliced  
1 1/2 cups salad oil  
1 cup orange juice concentrate  
1/4 cup balsamic vinegar (available at specialty food stores)  
8 bibb lettuce leaves

Marinade the pork tenderloin overnight in the Hoisin sauce with the Cajun spice mixture. Combine the oil with the orange juice and vinegar and mix. Toss pears in this mixture. Brown the pork tenderloin in a hot saute pan and roast in the oven till medium rare. Line plates with the various lettuce leaves and place pears on top. Place thin slices of pork tenderloin on the top of the pear salad. Garnish with watercress and season with salt and pepper, if desired.

## School-restaurant lunches bargains

Restaurants listed below are just a few of the best at area schools offering culinary arts.

All are open for lunch during the regular school year, with some closed on Monday or Friday for classroom activities and special functions. Needless to say, it's best to call ahead, not necessarily to make reservations but just to make sure of the hours and the fact that the restaurant is serving.

Prices vary, and alcohol is a no-no, except for the chef adding a pinch to the strongolf or whatever. These places are the best kept secrets of the staff who work in the buildings. You will not be disappointed and, furthermore, you will be assisting the student chefs by supporting their programs.

One word to the wise, remember these are learning programs and if you're looking for a place to have a power lunch or are in a hurry, best come back when you can sit down, relax and enjoy.

And enjoy you will. Trust me, these are winners.

**COLLEGES**  
Schoolcraft College, 18600 Haggerty Road, Livonia, phone 591-6400, ext. 585  
The American Harvest Restaurant

In the Waterman Campus Center, this is the granddaddy of them all. One of the nation's leading culinary institutions. Open Monday-Wednesday from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Thursday from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Thursday is buffet day, but everything is prepared, served and supervised under the direction of the best in the business. Certified Master Chefs are on the teaching staff, and if the food doesn't knock your socks off, the facilities will.

Featuring table-side cooking with a menu that changes daily. You must order late just to see the presentation. Catering available.

Oakland Community College, Orchard Ridge Campus, 27055 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills, phone 471-7605  
The Ridgewood Cafe

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## Shoppers go bananas in supermarket

Quick — what's the number-one seller in the produce department of North American supermarkets?

If you answered "banana," you probably belong to the group of folks who consume upwards of 10 pounds per year. And that's just eating them plain and unadorned. Increase that amount to 15 pounds per year if you enjoy bananas in muffins, salads and fancy desserts.

Although it looks like a tree, and is often called a tree, the banana plant is not a tree at all. There is no wood in the stem rising above the ground. The stem is actually comprised of leaf stalks growing one inside the other.

North Americans are most familiar with the large yellow, smooth-skinned variety of banana known as Gros Michel (Big Mike) or the Martinique and Cavendish varieties. Bananas are believed to have originated primarily in Malaysia about 4,000 years ago. People probably used bananas for food long before recorded history.

The armies of Alexander the Great found the banana growing in India in 327 B.C. Arabian traders introduced the banana into Africa at a very early date. Soon after the discovery of the New World, explorers took bananas from Africa to tropical America where today about two-thirds of the world's bananas are produced.

taste buds  
chef Larry  
Jones



IT WAS NOT until the later part of the 19th century that bananas were brought to North America in quantities for sale in stores. Even then, only people who lived near seacoast cities where banana schooners docked tasted or saw bananas. Bananas are more perishable than some other fruits, so specialized, rapid transport needed to be developed before the use of bananas became widespread.

Bananas grow best where the soil is deep and rich and where the climate is warm and moist. They are raised in the tropics of both the East and West hemispheres. The most important commercial banana-producing region is Latin America.

Bananas are harvested green, a whole bunch at a time, by a manual operation. One worker with a machete on a long pole lops

the stem of the banana bunch, setting the bunch onto the shoulder of a second person who carries it for transportation to a central gathering point.

Ripened bananas turn from green to the familiar yellow as the starch in the fruit hydrolyzes into sugars, causing the banana to become sweet. Within a period of 12-18 days, bananas must be harvested, shipped several thousand miles, ripened and sent to retail stores.

BANANAS ARE best when the peel is solid yellow and speckled with brown and still quite firm. They continue to ripen at room temperature and they can be refrigerated for three to five days, though refrigeration causes the peel to darken. To hasten the ripening of green bananas, special ripening bowls can be used, or, if you choose to save the \$9.95, a brown paper bag will suffice nicely.

Loaded with nutritional value, bananas are a great source of potassium and Vitamin A.