

Fantasy village

Of gingerbread and lollipops, sugar cubes and gum drops

The Christmas trees are made of colored popcorn. The street lights are made of candy canes. The houses are made of gingerbread or cookies, with roofs of gum drops or chocolate kisses.

An inverted ice cream cone serves as the church steeple. Frosting is the mortar between the M&M bricks. The streets are made of sugar cubes.

The artistry comes from executive chef Dave Wilson and his staff in the Novi Hilton. Their Gingerbread Village is the stop-in-your-tracks point for passers-by in the hotel's main lobby.

LAURIE ROBINSON took the first prize in a contest among the culinary artists who each contributed a building or two for the village, with her house made of spun sugar.

Jeff James took the second prize for his home in the village. The third prize went to Mark Fishman, who

created the cider mill and pond. Other contributors were Tim Fitzpatrick, Jerry Painter, Dell Kernohan and Wilson.

"I had our directors of catering and purchasing and our chief engineer serve as judges, which pretty much covered all the bases," Wilson said.

Wilson has directed the contest for the past three years. He does out the prizes supplied by the Hilton, sets up the village and then acts as maintenance man to repair any damage or replace an odd mint or licorice stick that might disappear.

WILSON DIDN'T win any of the prizes because his contribution stood best alone outside of the village.

"It just didn't fit in," he said. "I got carried away. It was too big for the village and I ran out of room." Wilson named his contribution

"Sugar Plum Palace." It is now standing in the entryway to the dining room for guests to enjoy while they are waiting to be called to a table.

The palace is predominantly lavender and white. If guests look inside the front door, they will see an entire room full of gingerbread furniture, and a gingerbread Christmas tree surrounded with gingerbread presents.

THE ONE rule for the contest was that all of the buildings in the village were to be created only of edibles.

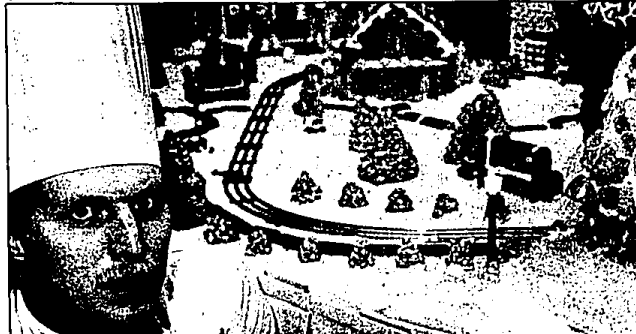
Wilson allowed just one exception for his village — the electric train, with tracks that stops at the gingerbread No. VI Station.

The Gingerbread Village will remain in the lobby of the hotel, on Eight Mile and Haggerty, through Dec. 31.



JOHN STORMZAND/staff photographer

Tiny lights twinkle from the homes in the gingerbread village as the train runs under the town's cider mill.



JOHN STORMZAND/staff photographer

Novi Hilton executive chef Dave Wilson recruited the hotel's culinary artists to contribute to the gingerbread village that has been the focal

point of the hotel's decorations for the past three holiday seasons.

A few rules to fool the Sugar Plum Fairy

The holidays are a time of giving, but unfortunately, what we usually give ourselves over the holiday are a few extra pounds.

Lorraine Stefano, founder and director of Think Trim has been helping people develop a more positive attitude about themselves and their relationship to food. Stefano believes being trim starts with thinking trim. The following are Lorraine Stefano's Think Trim tips to join in the holiday fun without gaining weight.

- Look forward to the fun of holidays rather than the food. Discover other activities and traditions, besides eating, to enjoy during the holiday season.

- Start your New Year's resolution to be healthy today. Think how much further along you'll be by January 1.

- Cut down. Don't cut out. Cut down on your portions rather than on your selections. You won't feel deprived and you will lose weight.

- Don't choose a candy by its cover. The foil wrapped Chocolate Santa was the Thanksgiving Turkey, which used to be the Halloween Pumpkin, which will soon be the Valentine Heart.

- Quit saying, "I always gain weight over the holidays." If you keep telling yourself you'll gain weight, you will.

- Leave the table satisfied, not stuffed. Stuffing is only for turkeys.

- Try not to let the cookie cutter fool you. The cookies shaped like angels, bells, candy canes, and snowmen all taste alike.

- Find the true joy of the holiday season in family, friends and festivities, not food.

- Holiday food? There is no such thing. Don't get your fill for the year right now. Prepare your favorite holiday foods when you want them. Yes, even in July.

- Find nutritious, delicious, calorie controlled foods for the holidays.

"SO, IN THIS time of giving, give yourself the best gift you can, a healthy and happy New Year. Start

right now by letting visions of a trim you dance in your head. For being trim starts with thinking trim, even in the Holiday Season," Stefano said.

Think Trim workshops, seminars and classes are conducted at colleges, hospitals, community centers, and corporations throughout the Metro Detroit area.

"Think Trim classes not only help you to lose weight, but to keep it off permanently," Stefano says. "We help people to change their thinking so that they can change their relationship to food, and develop a healthy lifestyle."

For information on the Think Trim program and the next time it will be given in this area, call 599-3283.



45th anniversary

Lawrence and Betty Gurtowaky, residents of Farmington Hills for 14 years, celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary with a dinner party in Country Epicure. The couple were married Nov. 20, 1943, in New Orleans, La., and have eight children and 13 grandchildren. She is a member of Hill and Dale Garden Club. They are members of Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church, enjoy bowling and playing pinochle.

Chicago trip planned

Registration deadline is Friday, Jan. 20, for a fly-in to Chicago, offered through Clarenceville Community Education Office. The one-day trip is scheduled for Wednesday, April 19.

Fee for the trip is \$62, which includes all transportation costs. For reservations, call the education office at 473-8933.



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