

## taste buds

chef Larry  
JanesWatching  
his weight  
fluctuate

There's no doubt about it. I have a great job. Not only do I get paid to write but I also get paid to eat. My job is hazardous to my health.

Nary a recipe gets printed that hasn't been tested. This is great for you, the reader, but wreaks havoc on my waistline. People ask me if I have to watch my weight.

"Yes, I watch it go up and down," is my pat response.

Granted, being a little over 6 foot 6 inches tall allows me to "carry" my weight better and, yes again, I have two pairs of pants, one for the natural me and another for the heavier me.

I also have kitchen cupboards crammed with Ultra Slim Fast, Light Balance Suppers, reduced-calorie mayonnaise and Special K. My freezer has a shelf dedicated to Weight Watchers, Lean Cuisine and the Budget Gourmet. I drink light beer, use light syrup on my waffles, snack on Pringle's Light and use nothing but skim milk.

**POLITE PEOPLE** tell me I don't have a weight problem but they're never present when I step from the shower in front of the bathroom mirror. I know I have to lose another 15 pounds or so. I also know that if I simply monitored my intake of bread and chocolate, I wouldn't be afraid to sit on one of those 29 lawn chairs from Kmart without fear of it collapsing.

I'm a full-fledged foodie. My membership is up to date at Vic Tanny's. I shun more desserts than I eat and have written off 7-11 Slurpees for the rest of my life, opting instead for grapefruit juice, which an ad in the National Enquirer says will help burn calories even while I sleep. I even play "Sweatin' to the Oldies" subliminally during my sleep but wake up the next morning with this insatiable urge to hug everything.

I have no secret to maintaining my weight within a prescribed limit. I have given up "dieting," long ago realizing instead that in order to maintain control of my size I must remain in control of my food intake.

I eat remarkably well, opting for healthier choices whenever possible. Since I would rather catch fish than cook it, 99 percent of my restaurant choices are made by choosing fish. I appreciate the art of proper sauteing, but it's my opinion that a restaurant be judged more on its ability to do wonders with fish and poultry than with sauces and beef. Most anyone can chargrill an Angus sirloin. Well-prepared fish doesn't need a sauce.

There is one thing I do that has turned into more of a habit than anything else. Drinking water has virtually replaced my casual snacking and two-pack-a-day cigarette habit. I stopped counting long ago but have no doubt I drink at least eight tall glasses of water daily. A trip to 7-11 or the party store now has me checking out the juice selections instead of the diet pop.

**WHEN INVITED** to dine, anyone who waits on me knows that they better leave the water jug. Even when partying, I make it a rule to have one drink and then follow it with the same size water. Not only does this fill me up sooner but the modifications have meant no more morning hangovers.

But most importantly, I eat well, even at home. I take regular recipes and try to make them more healthy and less caloric, without diminishing the taste. If you are one of those people who thinks that dieting is disastrous, check out the availability of some of the newer health publications. With summer around the corner, do your body a favor, and enjoy yourself in the process.



## Grandma inspired gourmet products

By Geri Rinschler  
special writer

**I**N JUST a year, Elaine Houlihan's gourmet food line has grown. Based in a state-of-the-art commercial kitchen in Auburn Hills, Houlihan's Culinary Traditions Ltd., now includes 10 fruit preserves, three Italian herb olive oils and an Italian bread dipping sauce, along with the gourmet applesauce that introduced her to the gourmet world.

Bloomfield Hills resident Houlihan admits she has never attended professional cooking or chef's classes, but she has been cooking most of her life. Inspired by her maternal grandmother, who was born north of Rome, Elaine — or Elena Houlihan as she is known to her family — was making pasta and rolling potato gnocchi by hand at the age of 4. Her fondest memories about growing up in upstate New York focus on the Italian culinary traditions — canning or preserving tomato sauce, making homemade pasta and putting up fresh fruit,

preserves and especially applesauce made from a variety of apples near her home in Cortland, New York.

Houlihan, who was professionally trained as a psychologist, said, "I've always loved to cook and for years wanted to do something in the culinary field." With the support and encouragement of her husband, she left a position in business imaging, which she held for a number of years with Eastman Kodak, to research Houlihan's Culinary Traditions.

A year later, in October 1989, she moved into a commercial kitchen. After researching the market for a year, there was no question in her mind that a gourmet applesauce and gourmet toddler applesauce was going to be her initial product. After selecting a source for the finest Michigan Empire apples, Houlihan tested and retested the final formula.

**SIX MONTHS LATER** she perfected a recipe for Elena's Bread-Dipping Sauce, an idea reminiscent of her grandmother's sauce that was served in individual



(Far left) Elaine Houlihan grates cheese over Focaccia Bread. (Left) Houlihan dines on Three-Pepper Linguini garnished with asparagus, and Focaccia Bread.

JERRY ZOLYNSKY  
staff photographer

bowls at the dinner table accompanied by crunchy Italian bread to munch on until the meal was ready.

"It's a zesty tomato sauce, absolutely like my family recipe," Houlihan said. Along with the dipping sauce, three herb olive oils were added to the line. Unlike other flavored olive oils, these extra-virgin Italian olive oils are blended with crushed garlic and a robust array of herbs.

"The oil blends are sauces designed to be tossed with freshly cooked pasta. I wanted to make a simple sauce that could flavor pasta quickly, in 10 minutes," she said. "I didn't see any herb oils in the market and realized how few people knew how to season pasta with herbs and oil."

Three months after marketing the oils, Houlihan experimented with Michigan fruits and created 10 fruit preserves. Her marketing talents were put to good use designing labels and naming the preserves after American cities which provided the inspiration — Traverse City Tart

Cherry, Atlanta Peach and New York Apple Raspberry, to name a few.

All the preserves are made in small, 40-quart batches. They are hand-stirred and hand bottled. Every batch is numbered and logged by each kitchen employee before shipping.

**JUST BRING UP** the subject of preserves and Houlihan responds with pride. "There is an art to making preserves." Writing the recipe is only part of the job, she added. You must check the pH levels, make sure each batch has the correct amount of pectin because different crops have a varying amount of sugar and water content.

Most of Houlihan's Culinary Traditions can be found locally at Get Sourced, in Trappers Alley, Detroit; all three Merchant of Vines shops (Birmingham, Southfield and Troy); the Market Basket, Franklin, the Quorton Market, Birmingham; Mullins and More, Birmingham; and Neiman Marcus, Chicago. As you might expect, this creative

*All the preserves are made in small, 40-quart batches. They're hand-stirred and hand bottled.*

cook is always in the process of developing and marketing new products. Houlihan wants to maintain a quality product and does not have any plans to mass produce her gourmet foods, but there is no telling which culinary delight she will bottle next.

## Atmosphere rated a winner at new Old Woodward Grill

Chris Tobias, executive chef, makes beef teriyaki at Old Woodward Grill.

STEPHEN H. CANTRELL  
staff photographer



**OLD WOODWARD GRILL ★★**  
555 Old Woodward, Birmingham, 642-9400  
HOURS: 11 a.m. to midnight, every day.  
No reservations.  
PRICES: Same menu, lunch and dinner.  
Appetizers, \$3.95-\$7.95  
Sandwiches, \$4.95-\$8.95  
Main Courses, \$6.95-\$19.95 (includes salad, fresh vegetable, potatoes and roll).  
Desserts, \$3.95-\$4.25. Children's menu.  
MasterCard, Visa, American Express

**RESTAURANT RATING GUIDE**

★	Average
★★	Good
★★★	Very Good
★★★★	Excellent
★★★★★	Superb

### DISHING IT OUT



menu is inconsistent, containing both winners and losers.

Clearly the star of the grill, which is trying to live down its initial sports bar moniker, is a recipe from the kitchen of a sports star — Pistons forward Joe Dumars' Louisiana seafood gumbo.

A bowl is nearly a meal in itself — and a delicious one at that, with firm shrimp and a flavorful — but not too spicy — gumbo. And, if you're a meat and potatoes kind of guy or gal, you also will score. The Old Woodward makes an excellent hamburger; the prime rib, which comes in three sizes and prices, is delicious; and the Anna potatoes — a house specialty — get raves.

You also will enjoy the eight-inch cheese pizza baked in the restaurant's special California brick oven and a nice assortment of "Super starters," which include a mesquite-grilled shrimp served with an interesting kiwi puree. Daily specials are posted on green chalkboards.

**THE GRILL'S BLACK** and white checkered oilcloth tablecloths and wood floors are kid proof — and the children's menu is clearly designed with McKid in mind — hamburgers and hot dogs with fries, chicken fingers, fish and chips and grilled cheese at modest prices ranging from \$1.95 to \$2.95. Plus, the big-screen TV hanging from the walls will make it seem just like home.

But if you're a grown up and salads are your meat and potatoes, you will strike out at the Old Woodward. The dressing on the

grilled chicken caesar varies — one day too mild and the next too garlicky; the Cobb salad is very mediocre; and the spinach salad is overly weighed down with thick, hot bacon dressing. Definitely avoid the cole slaw, which is nearly tasteless and nearly non-existent, for the tiniest saucerful is priced at \$1.50.

Desserts, too, were a disappointment. The waitress touted the mud pie, only to sheepishly return to say they were just making it and it takes several hours to solidify. Her recommendation for vanilla ice cream on the "Grannie's apple crisp" was also unfulfilled — it turned out they were out of vanilla ice cream. And the warmed-up apple crisp was only fair, as was the "Mile Marker 86" key lime pie, which missed the mark on tartness.

Also, beware some unexpected pricyness on wines by the glass — for example, Kendall-Jackson is \$5.95.

**THAT ASIDE**, the Old Woodward is a more comfortable place to be than its two predecessors — Archibald's and Panache. Its young staff is clearly trying hard. It's an appealing lunch spot for those who work, live or shop in Birmingham. It's a hot spot after 5 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, when the singles line up. And, as mentioned earlier, it's a great place to take children of any age.

Chef Christopher Tobias, a graduate of the respected culinary arts program at Schoolcraft College and who previously was with Panache, says he has been concentrating on entrees — and will be turning his attention to the rest of the menu. "We opened with kind of a flurry. We need some fine tuning," he acknowledges. We look for this restaurant to move up in the standings.

Restaurant reviews are written by four staff members on a rotating basis. Any questions on this review should be directed to Ethel Simmons, food editor, Observer & Eccentric, 36351 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150, or call 953-2105.