

Caterers 'talk turkey' and more for holiday

By Aileen Wingblad
special writer

IF THE THOUGHT of preparing the Thanksgiving bird and all the trimmings has your feathers ruffled — don't fret.

This month's traditional holiday feast has caterers "talking turkey" — and ready to take your dinner dilemmas under their (shem) wings.

Whether you might need an entire multi-course dinner, a prepared main course or sidedish, or simply an appetizer or dessert, a hassle-free answer from any of a number of area catering services is but a phone call away.

"Thanksgiving is definitely the most American of all meals and it is America's favorite meal," said Peter Goatley, co-owner with his wife Suzanne of Peter's Palate Pleaser in Bloomfield Township.

"Also, it's the only day of the year when most people are eating just about the same thing coast to coast," he said, adding that the down-home, traditional style of food that people "remember from their childhoods" is what most folks are yearning for at the holiday dining table.

YET DESPITE our common cravings, culinary professionals agree, today's hurried lifestyles leave little time for extensive meal preparation and can keep people longing for the holiday tastes of yesteryear.

Nils Johansson, owner of Bowman's Catering in Berkeley, which has serviced the metro area for almost 60 years, said it's "Grandma's cooking" that we're after.

"The homestyle, 'comfort food' is what we want... but today's generation is too busy making a living to have time to get it together."

"Back in Grandma's day, she'd start two or three days ahead, working in the kitchen and preparing the food. Mom doesn't want to stay home doing that, and with more and more families going to the (Thanksgiving) parade, football games and other events, who is going to cook?" he said.

Enter the ease and convenience of catered food, said Johansson. It's not uncommon for people to place an order beforehand, head out to the parade or stadium, and pick up the turkey and stuffing or whatever on the way home.

One year we had one family who called and ordered one turkey dinner package along with an extra prepared turkey. That was fine and all, but seemed a bit unusual, so we asked them why they would need an extra turkey. Apparently, the year before the family had eaten all the turkey on the way home.

"So they needed one turkey for the ride home and another for dinner," he said.

ANOTHER REASON holiday catering is becoming more popular, agree caterers, is that the techniques

and recipes for preparing family favorites aren't being passed down anymore.

"It amazes me the number of people every year who order just gravy, for instance," said Bowman.

"They know what they want, but they just aren't sure how to do it. They might have tried it a few times but just weren't satisfied. There are certain techniques and temperatures and all to making a good gravy," he adds.

Goatley of Peter's Palate Pleaser concurs. "People just don't know how to cook anymore. The experience of a mother teaching her daughter just isn't there. If the mother doesn't cook, how is the daughter to learn? It's a dying art... you are going to see more and more restaurants and professionals taking over the job. It's a great business, well, we all have to eat," said Goatley.

Farmington Hills caterer Janis Levin-Gorelick, owner of Classic Cuisine which operates out of the Birmingham Temple, puts it bluntly: "It's not only that women don't plan the meal anymore. They don't know how."

That, along with more and more men taking the responsibility of holiday entertaining even though they can't be bothered with all the food preparation, is certainly helping the catering business along, said Levin-Gorelick.

"My motto is 'Be a Guest at Your Own Party,'" she said, adding that her business runs the gamut of service.

"I'm a custom caterer. I have no preset packages," Levin-Gorelick said. I take a look at what a customer needs, how many are coming to the dinner and the budget of the customer. Then, I design the menu to fit their needs. Anything goes."

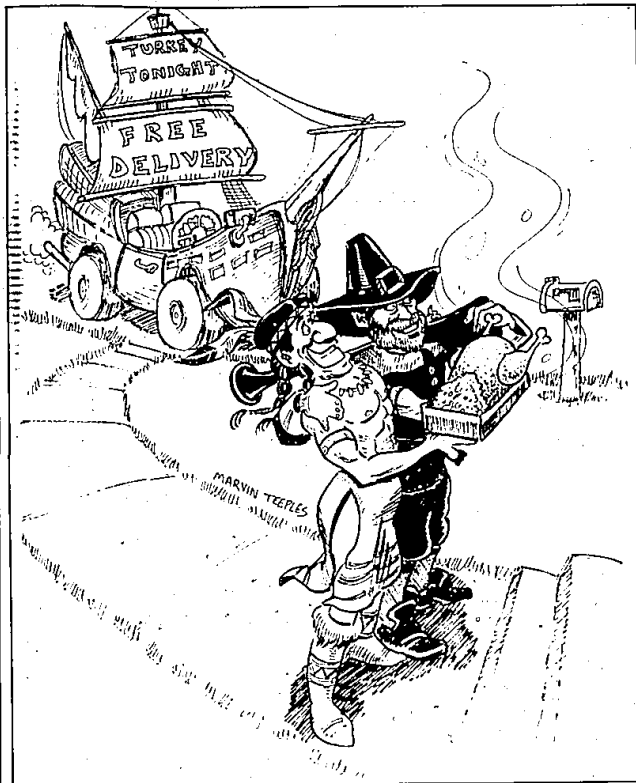
And that includes orders that aren't complete without a hint of secrecy, according to Levin-Gorelick.

"Sometimes, people will order something very traditional and bring in their own dishes or pie pans or what have you and have me fill it up. That way, they can pass it off as their own. That's pretty standard with most caterers. It happens often enough, but I never tell."

So just how much will a catered holiday meal cost? Prices, styles and selections vary from business to business, of course. While Levin-Gorelick creates an order around one's budget, a traditional turkey dinner package from Bowman's, complete with a 12 pound turkey, two quarts of sage dressing, two quarts of giblet gravy and a pumpkin pie runs \$49. The ever-popular giblet gravy, at \$3 per quart, is available on its own, as are a host of other entrees and accompaniments.

Caterers also accommodate smaller groups. Peter's Palate Pleaser offers a "Single Turkey Dinner" — enough for two average appetites — for \$10.95. The order comes with both breast and dark meat, gravy, mashed sweet potatoes, herb bread stuffing and cranberry relish. An extensive a la carte menu is available as well.

So, if you find yourself unprepared, unwilling or unable to get your meal together this Thanksgiving, don't be a turkey. Call a caterer.



Impact of incinerator bonds still uncertain, says Deadman

By Casey Hans
staff writer

The top official of a regional solid waste authority says his group is unsure what impact the \$500 million bond issue recently approved by voters in Oakland County will have here.

To date, members of the Resource Recovery and Recycling Authority of Southwest Oakland County have received little information on how the county will approach the plan, which calls for a controversial incinerator to be built in Auburn Hills, a countywide recycling program and a landfill to serve the county.

Voters countywide approved the measure by only 223 votes.

"I guess it's kind of up in the air," said Robert Deadman, Farmington city manager and chairman of the recycling authority. "Everybody's waiting for the county to come back to us."

COUNTY OFFICIALS have said they will first approach the recycling portion of the program, then attempt to get inter-governmental agreements with local communities which will pledge their tonnage to the incinerator.

The recycling authority represents the cities of Farmington, Farmington Hills, Southfield, Novi, Westland, Walled Lake and South Lyon, plus Lyon Township. The regional group previously rejected an inter-govern-

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mental agreement with the county and developed its own plan to deal with the waste stream. It already has begun curbside recycling programs.

High on the list of questions, Deadman said, is how local communities who buy into the county program will pay for it, especially in light of criticism by Farmington resident Patrick Anderson and his group Taxpayers United.

The group contends mandatory user fees for such programs are unrealistic. Anderson has criticized the recycling authority communities of Farmington, Farmington Hills, Novi and Southfield, which he claims is really a tax.

Deadman said the recycling authority communities would not likely participate in the county's recycling program because they have their own, and any consideration of using the county incinerator would be based on economics and looking at the scope of the entire project.

THE JOB OF handling the county's garbage is difficult for groups like the authority, Deadman said, because many of the rules change midstream. "We're trying to hit a moving target, whether it be the county, the DNR or the EPA," he added.

In the Observer coverage area, authority members Farmington and Farmington Hills passed the bond issue, Southfield and Novi voters turned it down. Deadman said he believes the emphasis on recycling and getting word out about the garbage space problem helped the issue pass, although by a narrow margin countywide.

"I really believe all of these recycling programs and discussions played a major role," he said. "They (residents) recognize we've got to have somewhere to take the trash."

Deadman said the authority is "not in a crisis situation," so can afford to wait for the county to fine tune its plan.

Program christened Alternative Academy

The alternative high school program which started in the Farmington Public Schools this fall now has a name.

Called the Farmington Alternative Academy, the school has 35 students enrolled who might not otherwise attend high school. School/community relations director Pamela O'Malley said students chose several names, and presented them to the Alternative Education Steering Committee for final selection.

"We wanted the word 'alternative,'" and the other suggestions didn't have that," she said.

THE SCHOOL is based in the Farmington Training Center, located on Thomas Street in downtown Farmington. Students there, both

male and female and between the ages of 16-19, say the alternative program gave them another chance to learn, many did not learn well in the traditional environment of the district's three high schools. The program has a small teacher-to-student ratio and is designed to offer more personalized instruction.

A majority of students have showed above average skills when tested on skills.

O'Malley said the district has been pleased so far with the program which offers a similar curriculum as traditional schools, but with a specialized focus.

It is funded with state money through the district's adult education department.

Commander finishes training

Farmington Public Safety Department Commander Michael Wiggins completed an upper level management training program at Eastern Michigan University on Nov. 8.

The "School of Police Staff and Command" is provided by the Illinois-based Northwestern University Traffic Institute and is held one week per month over a 10-month period. It covers all areas of law enforcement management and is presented by Northwestern instructors and Michigan law enforcement experts.

Wiggins joined the public safety department in 1979. He began his career at the Westland Police Department in 1978.

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