

LET'S GO! DINING

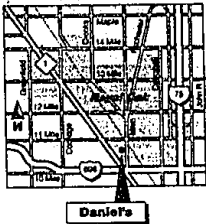
Elegant Daniel's serves Old World favorites

BY JUDITH DONER BERNIK
SPECIAL WRITER

Daniel's is Syrena Vander-Voort's favorite restaurant. "His food is consistent, the style is unique," described the Troy resident. She and her friend, Irwin Epstein of West Bloomfield, often dine at the elegant restaurant between Washington and Main streets in the heart of Royal Oak. They also have used its catering facilities.

"Both of us really like the atmosphere, the old world elegance," Epstein said. "And the menu is different." But this evening Vander-Voort and Epstein aren't sitting in the gilded, elegant Red Room surrounded by heavily framed art with fine china and one-of-a-kind serving pieces beneath the huge vintage crystal chandelier. They have come to try out the restaurant's new lounge, The Martini Room, nestled in the Green Room, the smaller of the restaurant's two dining rooms. There every Thursday, Friday and Saturday night, the lights are dimmed, black tablecloths are substituted for white, and live jazz fills the room.

The Martini Room is the brainchild of the restaurant's special events director, Fiona Palmer of Birmingham. "I saw a need in this area for a regular jazz club, that's



elegant and comfortable to be in," she said. She reports people have been lined up "out the door" since the room opened in mid-November — exactly a year after partners Daniel Kozak II, Richard Sphar and Joseph Maniaci opened Daniel's.

It is named for chef Daniel Kozak, who owned and operated The Royal Eagle in Indian Village for 15 years before its closing in 1991. Before that, he had Under the Eagle in his native Hamtramck. Kozak happily devotes full-time to the kitchen, while Troy residents Sphar and Maniaci, who's also a builder, are in charge of the "front of the house."

Daniel's
200 W. South Street, Royal Oak
(810) 541-0050
Menus: European cuisine with emphasis on Polish, French and Italian dishes. Dinner: Appetizers and salads, \$4.00 — \$10.50. Entrees: \$14.50 to \$21.95. Desserts: \$4.50 to \$8.50. Vegetarian choices. Lunch service will stop after the holidays.
Reservations: Advised. Major credit cards accepted.
Seating capacity: 120 in Red Room; 55 in Green Room.
Hours: Seven days a week, 5 — 10 p.m. Mon. through Thurs.; 5 — 11 p.m. Fri., Sat.; 4 — 9 p.m. Sun.
After hours: The Martini Room open 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. Thurs. — Sat. for drink, food, dancing, live music. What to wear: Dressy sportswear or business attire.

"We're a dinner restaurant," Kozak describes, "serving a combination of country European to fine gourmet." He has taken regional European dishes, primarily from France, Italy and Poland, and adapted them for American palates.

"You can't take them straight from Europe to America," said the chef, who learned to cook from his mother and grandmother. "People are more health conscious here." So he spends a lot of effort finding ways to lighten up his dishes without sacrificing taste.

The menu changes three to four times a year to reflect seasonal preferences. Nightly specials (cur-



WILLIAM HANSEN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

rently venison) coincide with what's "in season."

The wine list has also changed since the restaurant opened. "We first attempted to get in a lot of European wines," Sphar said. "But the American public loves California wines."

Kozak considers soups, sauces and desserts his forte. Nearly every entree includes a sauce. He particularly likes the Tourneforts of Beef Madagascare and the Saddle of Rabbit Jerome on the current menu.

Larry and Sandy Altman of West Bloomfield used to dine at The Royal Eagle. They made their second trip to Daniel's late last month where they particu-

ly enjoyed an appetizer of small shrimp sauteed with a dill and ginger beurre blanc sauce.

The lettuce and tomato dinner salad was enlivened by a slice of cantaloupe and both the house dressing — dill avocado — and the sesame sweet and sour they found excellent.

Of particular note was the Penne Pasta Bolognese (beef sauteed with herbs, onions, garlic and carrots) and the Salmon Verde (sauteed Pacific salmon with a green herb sauce). Although a fancied potato was both attractive and delicious, it could have been warmer, they said.

They opted for bites of one of

the house-made tortes, but Daniel's features Souffle Marlynn — a chocolate souffle enlivened with a banana layer and flavored with bananas and chocolate liquors — for die-hard dessert eaters. It is prepared for two or more.

Service was friendly and attentive.

Daniel's is well suited to being an occasion restaurant. Fred Fochheimer and Rosemary Holland of Bloomfield Township were there to celebrate their 20th anniversary.

That same week night another customer took over the entire Green Room complete with live musicians to make his proposal of marriage.

Satisfy your holiday appetite

Here are some holiday dining adventures you won't want to miss.

■ "A Fractured Christmas Carol," a comic, musical twist on the classic old tale, will be presented 7 p.m. Thursday-Saturday, Dec. 15-17 at Gino's Restaurant, 1985 Cass Lake Road, Waterford. Tickets for the dinner/theater package are \$20 per person. Call (810) 682-6540.

■ Cady's Grill and Eastern Michigan University are presenting "The Office of the Magi," 5 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 17, and Sunday, Dec. 18, at Eastern Michigan University Theatre. The O. Henry classic musical features a seven-course, family style meal at Cady's followed by the musical in EMU's Depot Town Center. During the meal, entertainment will be provided by the award-winning cappella quartet A.V.Y. Cady's Grill is at 34 Cross St. in Ypsilanti's historic district. The Depot Town Center is adjacent to the restaurant. Tick-

ets are \$24 per person available by calling (313) 487-1221.

■ Cafe Cortina, 30176 W. 10 Mile, Farmington Hills, is offering a Christmas Eve dinner — 7 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 24. Warm, cozy dinner served in various courses with guests selecting a choice of entree. Cost \$48 per person. Call (810) 474-3033 for reservations.

■ The Lark, Old English Holiday Feast, 7 p.m. November, Tuesday, Wednesday, Dec. 19-21. Holiday repeat accompanied by live music, including madrigals and carols. The main dish is roast fresh goose with port wine sauce. Cost is \$75 per person and does not include beverage or gratuity. The Lark is at 6430 Farmington Road, West Bloomfield. Call (810) 681-4466 for reservations.

■ Gentili's Hole-in-the-Wall restaurant in downtown Northville is celebrating the holidays with two special events — lunch with Santa and a kid's Christmas show, and "Christmas Capers," a dinner theater presentation, 11:30 a.m. Satur-

day, Sunday, Dec. 17-18. Call (810) 349-0552 for reservations and information.

■ Gentili's Dinner theater is presenting the hilarious show, "Christmas Capers," through Dec. 31. The cost for dinner and show is \$37.10 per person. (Includes tax and tip.)

■ Norman's Elm Street Station in Birmingham is offering a special New Year's Eve menu, prepared by new chef Mike Boyce which includes appetizers and entrees such as filet mignon, stuffed jumbo shrimp and whitefish. Prices for main courses range from \$13.95 to \$22.95.

Reservations required with a \$25 deposit. Norman's is at 245 S. Etowah, south of Maple. Call (810) 647-7774.

Mel Rancher starts the festive evening performing on the stage 6:30-8:30 p.m. Dancing begins at 8 p.m. with music provided by "David Myles and the Myles-tones." A \$5 entertainment fee is charged after 8 p.m., party favors and a champagne toast at midnight are included.

Reservations required with a \$25 deposit. Norman's is at 245 S. Etowah, south of Maple. Call (810) 647-7774.

■ DAKOTA BOON BATHHOUSE Variety of holiday events at this German style restaurant, 17324 John R., Detroit including St. Nicholas Inn on Dec. 18, and the 2nd annual knowledge cutting contest and sing-along, 8 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 22. Call (313) 867-9722.

■ GANDY DANCER Variety of holiday events at the Detroit or Dearborn station for trip to Gandy Dancer in Ann Arbor, Dec. 21 and 22. Train leaves Detroit 5:29 p.m. and Dearborn 5:40 p.m. Cost \$48.50 per person includes train tickets, dinner, taxes and gratuities. (Alcohol is extra). Guest band entertains on board. Football brunch offered, 9-11 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 29. Cost \$14.50 per person. Call (313) 759-0592.

■ HOTEL HOLLY Victorian Feast, Friday, Dec. 23, Christmas Eve Dinner, Dec. 24. Special holiday brunch every Sunday in December. Call (810) 634-3208.



Restaurant Specials

Send items to be considered for publication to: Keely Wygonik, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150, or by fax (313) 591-7279.

Special events

New Year's Eve

■ MESSIAN BEAR Banquet Style dinner, live entertainment, strolling musicians from Moscow, party favors, cost \$95 per person. Advance tickets on sale now. Call (810) 655-9229.

■ WESTON HOTEL Michigan Opera Theatre New Year's Eve Gala, 7 p.m. to 1 a.m. Dec. 31. Cost \$375 per couple, includes open bar, four-course dinner, MOI performance, dancing, and overnight accommodations. Tickets also available for party only at \$125 per person or \$250 per couple. Other New Year's events include dinner at the Summit, 1919 River Bistro, party in Summit Lounge. Call for details. (313) 569-8200.

College restaurants

■ OAKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE Ridgeway Cafe in 1305 of Tinsel Hall, Oakland Community College, 27055 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills. Student-run restaurant is open for lunch 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Call (810) 471-7788.

■ SCHOOLCRAFT COLLEGE The college's gourmet restaurant, American Harvest, in the Western Center on campus, 16600 Haggerty Road, Livonia, is now open for lunch, noon to 1:15 p.m. Tuesday through Friday. A lavish buffet is offered each Friday at \$10.95 per person. Call (313) 402-4488.

Brunch

■ KJ & BERRY Sheraton Oaks, across from Twelve Oaks Mall, meet CJ Zaret and Denny McElroy. Banquet brunch served 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Adults \$12.95, senior citizens \$10.95. Live Top 40 entertainment 5:30 p.m. Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Call (810) 348-5000.

Entertainment

■ LE METRO Jazz Duo, Marvin Kahn on alto clarinet and Keith Vreeland, piano, Thursday nights at Le Metro, 29555 Northwestern, Southfield. Call (810) 353-2757.

COUNTRY SOUNDS

Wilford Peaslee, piano and Bob Barnes Sax, 6:30-10:30 p.m. Wednesdays and Thursdays. Wilford Peaslee Jazz Quartet featuring vocalist Renee Jackson, Fridays and Saturdays. The restaurant is at 42050 Grand River, Novi. Call (810) 349-7770.

Holiday gifts

■ BOLDEN BROTHERS Online discount gift certificates that might make the perfect good holiday gift for the man or woman who has everything. Call (810) 559-4230.

■ MICHIGAN FIRE BRADY'S BISTRO The restaurant at 20053 Town Center Drive, Novi, is offering gift certificates. They are accepting reservations for New Year's dinners. They're offering a New Year's dinner-only package. Call for details. (810) 380-8460.

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