

DINING

Envoy Cafe draws neighborly crowd

BY JUDITH DONER HENNE
Special Writer

The Envoy Cafe is what many restaurants aspire to be but aren't — a neighborhood restaurant.

Plus it's one works because the food is simple and good enough that you would want to eat it on a regular basis. And because it gives you fair value — reasonable prices for nicely sized portions.

Plus it's in a shopping plaza directly on the border of two neighborhoods that eat out a lot — West Bloomfield and Farmington Hills.

In fact, I saw couples I knew at two different tables dining there on a recent Friday night, although the cafe holds only about 60 people.

Eddie and Ed Broida from Farmington Hills were enjoying fish dishes, she the seared salmon marinated in soy, ginger and garlic with fresh vegetables and Basmati rice (\$10.95); he, the whitefish, made differently each night, this night with a light crust of crushed almonds accompanied by grilled sweet potato slices (\$9.50).

"This was our second visit," Eddie said. "I think of it as a little neighborhood bistro. We always run into people we know."

That's just what owner Larry Loberman likes to hear. "I come from a background of small, intimate rooms," the Southfield resident says, remembering way back to Little Harry's. The pony-tailed Loberman lays claim to 31 years in the liquor and entertainment industry, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather before him. Specifically, he ran Axes, a jazz club on Eight Mile Road, for many years. "Food has always been a hobby and a passion of mine."

But although he has owned bars, he reduced the size of the one he inherited from Brendan's Pub, which formerly occupied the space.

"I didn't want the bar to be the



SHEILA WEINBAUM/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Balancing act: Sheila Weinbaum, the designer of Envoy Cafe's decor, poses with dishes as Carmen Miranda might. Larry Loberman holds the top plate. The dish on her head is Shrimp and Lobster Polenta; on her right hand, Calamari; left hand, Chicken & Shrimp Sauce.

focal point. I wanted the women in the area to feel comfortable coming for lunch."

And he had chef Brian Gallagher, formerly of Kyla's in Royal Oak, tailor the small but interesting menu to draw the area's health-conscious clientele.

One of the reasons the Broidas tried Envoy Cafe in the first place is that they heard that Gallagher was the chef.

That is partially true. Gal-

lagher designed the menu, but now just comes in on Sundays when he experiments with new dishes.

In fact, most of the cooking is now in the hands of Loberman's brother-in-law Remy Berdy, plus Tim McIngie (who worked with Gallagher at Kyla's) and Steve Murphy (via Jimmy Schmidt and Matt Prentice restaurants).

Each day, several specials appear on the menu that one or

Envoy Cafe

WHERE: 33210 14 Mile Road (Greenbury Plaza), West Bloomfield, (810) 655-0220.

HOURS: 11 a.m. to midnight, Monday-Thursday; 11 a.m. to 1 a.m., Friday-Saturday; 5 to 10 p.m., Sunday.

•MENU: New health-conscious American cuisine. Vegetarian-friendly. Ample portions.

•PRICE RANGE: Moderate.

•RESERVATIONS: Parties of six or more.

•CREDIT CARDS: Major accepted.

•DRINKING AND SMOKING: Smoking only at bar.

•ATMOSPHERE: Resembles small European cafe. Light jazz performances 9 p.m., Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

•DRESS: Casual.

another of them has created.

In the three months since it opened, Envoy Cafe has generated a separate lunch menu. The most popular dishes, Loberman says, are the garden burger of honey mustard, lettuce, tomato, alfalfa (\$5.25); roasted vegetable sandwich with pesto dressing and goat cheese (\$5.50); and the crab pesto salad sandwich on pita (\$5.50). All are accompanied by grilled sweet potatoes.

At dinner, Jim Prenzlauer handles the door, greeting many of his West Bloomfield neighbors. His wife, Sheila Weinbaum, designed the interior with its pastel walls and painted vines of flowers and fruits.

Prenzlauer says the Calamari appetizer grilled with sauteed onions, peppers and anise (\$5.50), is a hit as well as the ample roasted vegetable, Caccini and gorgonzola salads, all in the \$5 range.

RESTAURANT SPECIALS

Send items to be considered for publication to: Kelly Wygonik, Observer & Editor, The News-Papers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150, or by fax (313)591-7278.

New restaurants

Steamers Seafood Grill

Steamers Seafood Grill of Farmington Hills has opened a second location in Troy at 3304 Rochester Road (between Big Beaver and Waverly). Hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Saturday (lunch); 4:10 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 4:11 p.m. Friday-Saturday; 4:9 p.m. Sunday. (810) 524-2008

Special events

Fall Wine Tasting

Sponsored by the Townsend Hotel and The Fred Wagon Wine Shoppe, 7-9 p.m. Monday, Oct. 23 at the Townsend Hotel, 100 Townsend Rd., Birmingham. Cost: \$25 per person in advance, \$30 at the door. Over 65 wines from around the world will be tasted — 11 wines represented by 11 distributors. (810) 435-0719

Datsford Inn

Firestone Chat with special guests — Henry Ford, Harvey Firestone, Thomas Edison and turkey dinner, Friday, Oct. 20. Cost is \$25 per person. The Inn is at 26000 Grand River, Farmington Hills. Call for reservations, information. (810) 474-4500

America

Series of regional feasts featuring a different part of the United States in a prix fixe three-course meal. Cost \$25 per person, excluding tax and gratuity. Oct. 16, Florida/Caribbean; Oct. 23, California Vegetarian; Oct. 30, Cajun. Hearty feast on Oct. 19 will spotlight four wines from Silver Oak Vineyard. Cost is \$55 per person. The restaurant is on Woodward Avenue in Royal Oak, south of 14 Mile Road. Call for reservations. (810) 549-2000

Golden Mushroom

Wild Game Dinner 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 19. Cost is \$75 per person. The restaurant is at 16100 W. 10 Mile Road (corner of Southfield Road), Southfield. Call for information, reservations. (810) 559-4230

Brady's

Cigar Night, Oct. 10, Brady's Food & Spirits, 38123 W. 10 Mile Road, in the Holiday Inn, Farmington Hills. Cost: \$60 per person includes three exclusive cigars, five-course meal, and blend of wines and cognacs. Call for reservations. (810) 478-7780

Ann Arbor's Real Seafood Company

Second Oyster & Beer Fest, 6:30-9 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 18, 341 S. Main St. Cost \$45 per person. Includes fresh iced oysters, clams, mussels and linguine with clam sauce. Call for reservations. (313) 769-5960

Menu Specials

Cook's Garden Cafe

Offering an elegant Candlelight Dinner for Two for Sweetest Day. Includes lobster bisque, salad, choice of entrees, vegetables, bread and dessert. Each dinner comes in a gift-wrapped box, and even includes candles. Cost is \$75. It can be delivered or picked up. Cook's Garden Cafe is at 225 E. Maple, Birmingham. (810) 645-9595

Entertainment

Rollah

Steve King and the Diddies bring the music of the 1950s to Rollah, 34555 W. 12 Mile Road (between Drake and Farmington Roads) 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. every Wednesday night. Dancing encouraged. (810) 459-6852

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