

# DINING

## Changes come down the 'Pike' at popular restaurant

BY KEELY WYONIK  
STAFF WRITER

From Livonia, it was a long drive north on Telegraph to Pike Street Restaurant in Pontiac, but newly promoted general manager Brian McNamara, who lives in Redford, and makes the drive every day, assured me it would be worth it.

"Pontiac is very exciting," said McNamara. "It's very alive. I wish more people would come here, and give it a chance."

McNamara, who has been with the restaurant for six years, is also proud of Pike Street's success. The restaurant, which also caters private parties, has won numerous awards, and recognition in national magazines.

Newly promoted executive chef Randy Emert, previously sous chef, is captain of the Michigan Culinary Team headed for the World Culinary Art Salon this September in Germany, and follows in the footsteps of Brian Polcyn, now of Five Lakes Grille and Derin Moore, executive chef of Bay Harbor Yacht Club outside of Petoskey.

The World Culinary Art Salon, held every four years, is to chefs what the Olympics is to athletes. "It teaches you a lot about food," explained Emert who lives in Farmington Hills and graduated from Schoolcraft College in Livonia. "You learn from your mistakes. I'm not on the line cooking as much as I'd like. One day I'd like to become a Certified Master Chef. Competing helps me fine-tune my skills."

In talking about his recent promotion, Emert, who has been at Pike Street for seven years, and won numerous awards in Food Salon competitions, is quick to credit Brian and Derin.

"They taught me to cook from the heart, to use the freshest ingredients possible, and to have respect for the food," said Emert. Popular entrees such as duck, beef tenderloin, pickered and lamb remain, but garnishes, accompaniments, and menu specials reflect the changing seasons. You'll find venison, elk and other game on fall and winter menus, but not in the summer.

**Pike Street Restaurant**  
Where: 18 West Pike Street, Pontiac (810) 334-7878.  
Hours: 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday-Friday (lunch); 5-10 p.m. Monday-Thursday (dinner); 5-11 p.m. Friday & Saturday (dinner); closed Sundays.  
Menu: New American cuisine with a little European influence. Vegetarian friendly, menu includes pasta dishes (available in half-portion), seafood, fish, roast rack of lamb, chicken, and beef entrees. Entree salads and sandwiches on lunch menu.  
Prices: Lunch ranges from \$8.50 (sandwiches) to \$10.75 (entrees). Dinner ranges from \$15.50 (pasta entree) to \$24.50.  
Reservations: Recommended on Fridays and Saturdays.  
Credit cards: All majors accepted.  
Upcoming events:  
■ A Late Summer Night — 7 p.m. Monday, Aug. 18 to introduce Chef Randy Emert as the new Executive Chef and Brian McNamara, new General Manager. Cocktails and hors d'oeuvres will be served with a live performance by Punch and Kitty. Tickets \$25 per person, a portion of which will go to benefit Lighthouse, a foundation for abused children. Call (810) 334-7878 for reservations.  
■ Michigan Theme Dinner, honoring the foods and wines of Michigan — 8:30-7 p.m. (hors d'oeuvres), 7:15 dinner. Cost \$47.50 per person, excluding beverage, tax and gratuity. Call (810) 334-7878 for reservations.

Fish course: Sautéed Lake Superior Pickerel with Imley City Shellout Coulis, Mixed Field Green Salad with Fowlerville Plum Dressing, Main Course: Roast Gaylord Pheasant Breast with Howell Sweet Corn Polenta, Sage and White Bean Ragout, and Traverse City Cherry Chocolate Gâteau with Michigan Beaujolais Sorbet for dessert.

Some of the new selections include Breast of Chicken with Morel Mushroom Cognac Sauce and Veal Chop with Tomato-Artichoke Ragout.

"I've been trying to use leaner sauces without as much butter or cream, and I'm using more

herbs and spices for flavor," said Emert, who also added some vegetarian items to the menu. Daily specials reflect foods of the season, and allow patrons the opportunity to try something different.

"A lot of people have never been here," said McNamara. "Pike Street is hosting — A Late Summer Night — to raise money for Lighthouse (see chart), and to recognize our promotions. We put our heart and soul into it. It will be very beautiful. One room will be filled with hors d'oeuvres and there will be ice sculptures too. It will give first time customers a chance to see the restaurant. We'll have live entertainment and dancing."

I admit, I was curious. There's been a lot of renovation going on in downtown Pontiac. New restaurants are opening, the Strand Theatre on Saginaw is being redone, and there are night clubs and galleries you can walk to.

What customers don't see are the two banquet rooms upstairs that are used for catering business meetings, wedding, showers and other special events. You can even rent the whole restaurant if you want to.

"We've had couples get engaged in the Wine Cellar," said McNamara, opening the door to a cozy brick room in the basement, whose name speaks for itself. "It's fun and charming."

McNamara's and Emert's enthusiasm is contagious. "We have great employees," he said. "No one leaves. It's a fun place." Popular dinner entree, which include house salad, are the Char-Broiled Atlantic Salmon served with Smoked Salmon Horseshoe Crust, Sautéed Potatoes, Onion and Spinach



At your service: Executive Chef Randy Emert (left to right), Brian McNamara, general manager, and restaurant owner Jim Fitzpatrick inside the dining room at Pike Street.

(\$21.50). Roast Rack of Lamb with Blue Cheese Scallop Potatoes, and Grilled Artichoke-Eggplant Salad (\$25.50), and Pan Roasted Beef Tenderloin Medallions with Smoked Gouda Whipped Potatoes (\$24.50). Pasta choices feature Grilled Vegetable Orzo with Feta Cheese and Pesto (\$15.50 entree) and

Wild Mushroom Angel Hair in Olive Oil and Garlic or Sherry Shallots and Cream (\$17.50 entree). Pike Street also has a very fine wine list.

You'll find sumptuous salads, pastas, sandwiches and lighter entrees on the lunch menu. Choices include Sweet Corn, Cilantro and Avocado Salad with Poached Gulf Shrimp and Tequila Lime Vinaigrette (\$9.50), Sautéed Beef Tenderloin Tips, Grilled Wild Mushroom Toast \$7.50, and Broiled Lake Superior Whitefish with Sweet Corn Cakes and Green Tomato Salad, \$9.75.

### RESTAURANT SPECIALS

Send information for Restaurant Specials to: Keely Wyonik, Taste/Entertainment Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc., 38251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, or fax (313) 591-7279.

• The Lark Mexican Fiesta, 7 p.m. Monday & Tuesday, Aug. 26-27, \$75 per person, including beverage, tax or gratuity. A small Mariachi group, Mariachi Nuevo Zapopan, will entertain, there will be a piñata stuffed with treasure, call (810) 661-4466. Menu features

batter-fried stuffed chiles with piquant sauce, Red Snapper fillets baked in foil with crab meat, tomato, cilantro, and red onions and wood-grilled beef tenderloin marinated with tomatoes, mustard and herbs, Drunken Beans, Green Rice with Crawfish, Mocha-Glazed Chocolate Kahuna Cake with Kahuna Mousse, vanilla sauce.

• East Side Mario's "Dinner for Two — Movies for You," through Sept. 30 at metro Detroit's three East Side Mario's

restaurants. Each party purchasing two or more dinner entrees Sunday through Thursday, between 4 p.m. and closing, will be presented with a Blockbuster Video coupon. This coupon is valid Sundays through Thursdays, and expires Oct. 20. It is redeemable at any participating southeastern Michigan Blockbuster Video store location and allows the recipient to rent one movie and receive a second movie rental of equal or lesser value free.

NEW RESTAURANTS  
• Don Pablos — "Tex-Mex" restaurant which serves traditional Mexican dishes with a dis-

tinctive twist is under construction, and tentatively scheduled to open Saturday, Aug. 10 at 513 North Telegraph Road in Waterford.

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