

# DINING

## Rochester Chop House caters to a number of moods

BY ELEANOR & RAY HEALD  
SPECIAL WRITERS

Off Rochester's Main Street, the entrance to the Rochester Chop House is deceptively small. Once inside, you realize that there are two restaurants. One is a typical New England style seafood house, replete with raw bar, high tables with matching stools, a chalkboard menu and nautical decor. Walking to the back, you catch the first glimpse of the Chop House with its upscale, two-level white tablecloth dining room. Whatever your dining mood, owner Bill Kruse and managing partner Vince Clark cater to it.

When Kruse opened the Rochester Chop House in 1991, his partner was the late Chuck Muer. Kruse worked for Muer in the C.A. Muer corporation for 17 years and held the position of Vice President of Operations. Kruse knows the restaurant business from top to bottom. Both he and Clark are cordial hosts greeting guests on arrival and checking their satisfaction tableside as a meal progresses.

"The City of Rochester makes any restaurant special," Kruse remarked. "The small-town atmosphere is a drive back in time. During the week, we attract business people. On the weekend and often during the week, we cater to special occasion diners. We keep pricing below most popular upscale restaurants in Oakland County. The focus is on new foods with eight to 10 specials daily."

"Several times a year, Kruse runs month-long theme dinners. In May, it's "Taste of the Northwest," celebrating the



Seafood: Erik Kraynek (left to right), Bill Kruse, Vince Clark and Julie Enright at the Rochester Chop House.

Copper River salmon run. The 250-mile Copper River in southeast Alaska has a steep descent with spring thaw producing turbulent waters. Salmon entering the river from the ocean, do not feed once they enter fresh water. To reach spawning sites up the raging river, they derive energy solely from their natural body fat. Spent body fats and oils

result in rich, flavorful salmon. A limited number of fishing licenses are issued for the run, but Kruse's long association with top seafood suppliers ensures that his customers can taste the freshest King of Kings salmon. Chef Julie Enright has been with Bill Kruse's restaurants since he opened the Kruse and Muer concept on Rochester's

Main Street in 1990. Before that, she served as C.A. Muer kitchen manager under legendary Chef Larry Pagliara, who was the C.A. Muer Corporation's Executive Chef for 20 years. Chef Larry's memory is kept alive with a number of signature dishes. Additionally, Kruse travels around the country eating at

some of the nation's finest dining establishments. When he finds a dish he likes, he studies it, brings the idea back to his restaurant and has his chef put a unique spin on it.

Over the door from the kitchen, wall space is devoted to "Rochester Chop House thanks." A number of restaurants are credited. Among them Joe Muer's in Detroit; for the famous bean appetizer; Southfield's Excalibur is thanked for its char-broiled sirloin with hotel black butter, an unusual molasses-textured sauce created from caramelized vegetables. At \$24 for the 12-oz portion or \$28 for the 18-oz fillet, it is the most popular beef main dish.

For both business and pleasure, Dave and Tina Elliott from Oakland Township are Rochester Chop House regulars. They comment on daily specials and wines. The most popular seafood entrees at the Chop House are Shrimp in Lobster Cream stuffed with Maryland Crabmeat \$20 and Chop House Crab Cakes \$22, made from succulent Maryland lump crabmeat and broiled, not pan sautéed. In front of the house Kabin Krusers, fish tacos are the most frequently ordered appetizer. Fresh fish selections are 70 percent of sales with Seafood Provençal and Pan Roast leading the way.

An extensive wine list has a significant number of by-the-

**Rochester Chop House**  
Where: 306 Main Street, Rochester (810) 651-2299.

**Hours: Chop House:** Lunch Monday to Friday 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Dinner Monday to Thursday 5-10 p.m.; Friday and Saturday 5-11 p.m.; Sunday 4-9 p.m.

**Kabin Krusers:** Lunch Monday to Saturday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Dinner Monday to Saturday, 4-11 p.m.; Sunday 1-9 p.m.

**Menu:** Kabin Krusers offers casual ambiance for enjoying fresh fish and seafoods. Rochester Chop House specializes in upscale presentation of seafoods and chop house fare.

**Cost:** Appetizers \$3.50-\$9; Main courses \$11.50-\$28; Desserts \$4-\$6.

**Reservations:** Chop House only.

**Credit cards:** All majors accepted.

glass pours. The wine selected is brought tableside in the bottle. A small taste is poured. If accepted by the patron, a glass is poured. Applause. That's the way it should be done!

Keeping up with current trends in the balcony "Club Humidor," a smoking and cigar-friendly atmosphere seating 40 and equipped with state-of-the-art ventilation. The Chop House full menu is available in this dining area.

One of Gourmet magazine's America's Top Tables honors was awarded to the Rochester Chop House in 1995.

### WHAT'S COOKING

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#### RICK HALBERG REFOCUSSES AT EMILY'S IN NORTHVILLE

Rumors have been rampant for a few months that Emily's owner Rick Halberg planned to sell Emily's and become director of food service for the Novi and Beverly Hills locations of the World Class Fruit Markets. This will not happen. Halberg has refocused and plans to continue as chef/owner of Emily's (505 North Center, Northville), concentrating on what he does best - creative, world-class cooking in his own kitchen. Showcasing his talents are two special upcoming dinners Thursday, June 12 with the Chalone Wine Group and Wednesday, June 25, with foods with wines of Italy's Piedmont. Both are \$95. Phone (248) 349-0505 for reservations.

Halberg will be cooking off-premise at two other June events: St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher The Garden Party, Sunday, June 1, \$100 per person; (248) 626-7627, ext. 250 for tickets; and Sunday, June 8 at the Michigan Chef's Dinner at Tapawingo in Ellsworth. Phone (616) 688-7971 for details and reservations.

Additionally, the TV Food Network's Dining Around crew filmed at Emily's earlier this

month. Stay connected with What's Cooking for the exact date and time the show will air. If you watch Dining Around, you know it features the best chefs and restaurants in the country.

#### MEDITERRANEAN FEAST AT BIRMINGHAM'S FORTÉ

Forté's chef Keith Famic will team with Jacques and Laurent Porel, twin brothers and chefs of Le Jardin des Sens, a two-star Michelin restaurant in Montpellier, France, 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 20. A five-course degustation menu paired with the wines of Forté de France will feature the exciting and vibrant Mediterranean-style cuisine of all three chefs. Price is \$75 per person plus tax and gratuity. Phone (248) 694-7300 for reservations.

#### THE MOREL FEAST

Offered May 21 at Morels (248) 642-1094; May 22 at Relish (248) 489-8852; May 23 at Trattoria Bruschetta (248) 306-6210 and May 24 at Sebastian's (248) 649-6626. All feasts begin at 7 p.m., and reservations are required. The cost per person is \$39.95 (not including tax and gratuity). A wine package will be offered by Madeline Triffin at an additional cost.

#### JUST OPENED

Twist & Shout - 320 S. Main Street, Royal Oak (248) 547-

6255. Offers fresh homemade pretzels, 12 varieties of homemade soup, and ice cream.

Paint Creek Cider Mill & Restaurant - 4480 Orion Road, Rochester (248) 651-8361, has reopened after extensive renovations. The moderately priced menu features a variety of hearty entrees including Beef Short-Ribs, Chicken Pot Pie, Paint Creek Meatloaf, and Old English Fish & Chips. The Restaurant is closed Monday, and serves dinner only Tuesday-Thursday 4:00 p.m. and Fridays 4 p.m. to midnight. Saturdays feature lunch from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and dinner 4 p.m. to midnight. A sit-down Sunday brunch is offered 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. with dinner from 4-9 p.m.

### RESTAURANT SPECIALS

Restaurant Specials features theme dinners, menu changes, and restaurant openings. Send news items to: Keely Wygonik, Entertainment Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc., 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, or fax them to (313) 593-7279. INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF FOOD AND WINE

Begins, with a "culinary tour" of Italy at the Ritz-Carlton, 300 Town Center Drive, Dearborn. The 1997 Journey, sponsored by Ford Motor Co., consists of four week long tributes to be held on selected weeks between May and November. Each will salute the food and wine of a particular country or continent, and include a Wine-Maker Dinner,

Wine Tasting, and international specialties served throughout the week in The Cell, the hotel's restaurant. Fifty percent of the proceeds from all four Wine Tastings will be donated to four charities. CATCH (Caring Athletes Team for Children's & Henry Ford Hospitals) is the recipient of the 6-8 p.m. Friday, May 16, Italian Wine Tasting. The cost is \$35 per guest. For reservations, and more information, about The International Journey of Food & Wine, call (313) 441-2100.

#### THE GARDEN PARTY, LA PETE AU JARDIN

June 1 in the gardens of the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center, 27400 W. 13 Mile Road, Farmington Hills offers entertainment, wines from around the world, and an incredible array of food prepared by 60 of the area's renowned chefs. Tickets are \$100 per person. Patron tickets are \$400 and benefactor tickets are \$600. Call (810) 626-7627, Ext. 280.

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