

No. VI in Novi raises hotel dining to new heights

BY ELEANOR & RAY HEALD
SPECIAL WRITERS

Opened late last month, the sleek and stylish transformation of the former Trattoria Bruschetta to No. VI Chophouse & Lobster Bar is bound to be a hit, both with The Hotel Baronette guests and others seeking a fine dining steakhouse atmosphere.

Designed by Ron Rea to give the impression of a 1920s Havana Hotel, No. VI is inviting and instantly sets an upscale comfort level. Styled in warm dark woods, terra cotta tile floors, black and copper-toned fabrics set off white tablecloths, shimmering table settings, bamboo window coverings and accent chairs. The bamboo room, raised several feet above the main dining level, offers a power dining spot.

It is just this breakup of the floor plan plus others created by distinctive wood and glass cabinets that form private, cozy dining areas, tempering the overall noise level of a busy chophouse.

No. VI is one of 13 dining venues in the portfolio of the Unique Restaurant Corporation, masterfully orchestrated by 39-year-old restaurateur Matt Prentice and his partners. At the Novi location, Keith Schofield is

managing partner who after 22 years in the restaurant business, 13 with URC, is still in love with it. "I truly enjoy dealing with guests," he said. "The variety of people add energy, and unlike a corporate desk job, it is different every day."

The menu at No. VI bears the artful signature of URC's Corporate Chef Jim Barnett. "It's a steakhouse menu, but with greater variety," Barnett noted. "We believe that lobster is more popular than oysters, so we've focused on it as the seafood specialty. We've also trained wait-staff to prepare dishes tableside. By reservation, diners can have Steak au Fourn prepared tableside for two."

Executive Chef John "Chili" Rees likes the "fast pace and kicking out pristine product" at No. VI. Rees, who has worked in URC restaurant kitchens for nearly five years, learned the tools of the trade in the Oakland Community College culinary program. He cites Chef Kevin Enright for teaching him integrity and the fact that there are no short cuts in the preparation of great food. General Manager David Munro adds to this by saying "It's easy to satisfy diners with a great product."

No. VI Chophouse and Lobster Bar

Where: Hotel Baronette, 27790 Novi Road (in The Hotel Baronette), Novi (248) 305-5210.

Hours: Dinner only. Monday-Thursday 5:00-10:00 p.m., Friday and Saturday 5:00-11:00 p.m. Sunday 4:00-9:00 p.m.

Menu: Upscale steakhouse with lobster as principal seafood focus set in atmosphere reminiscent of a 1920s Havana hotel.

Cost: Starters and lobster bar specialties \$7-17; prime rib, chops and steaks \$20-30; seafood and surf/turf combos \$20-33; desserts average \$5.

Reservations: Recommended.

Credit cards: all majors accepted.

And the great product is emphasized on the menu: "It is our goal to be Michigan's Finest Steakhouse. We are the only Steakhouse in the Detroit Metropolitan Area to serve exclusively PRIME meat. Less than 2 percent of all beef meets the grade of Prime which makes

it not only the best, but also the most expensive. Prime may be costly, but we believe that you'll notice the difference."

Steak au Fourn adds a note of variety, Barnett spoke about. This house specialty, 14-ounce New York strip is rubbed with cracked Telicherry black pepper and pan roasted with Martell Cognac and porcini mushrooms.

At \$32.95, it is an ideal size for two people. For an additional \$1.95 per person, No. VI Steak Soup (prime steak morsels, garden veggies and Yukon Gold potatoes), The Wedge (iceberg lettuce, egg, tomatoes, croutons with choice of dressing) or house salad (assorted greens, tomatoes, chick peas, cucumber, Bermuda onions, ricotta cheese and choice of dressing) can be added.

Billed as Perfect Prime Rib, rubbed with garlic, herbs, cracked black pepper and salt, then slow-roasted at low temperature for five hours, served with housemade onion rings, horseradish sour cream and natural pan au jus, is well sized. Ten ounce \$20, 14-ounce \$24 and 18-ounce \$28. In the chop department, two hand-cut Colorado Lamb T-Bones with Paloise Sauce \$27 top the list, but the number one seller on the



STAFF PHOTO BY BRIAN MITCHELL

At your service: Executive Chef John "Chili" Rees (left) and General Manager David Munro at No. VI Chophouse & Lobster Bar.

former Trattoria menu, Veal Scallopini Marsala \$22, remains. If you like veal, don't play monopoly, head straight for Veal Chop Milanese \$25.

Steamed or broiled live Maine lobsters sized from 1-1/2 to 6 pounds are \$19.97 per pound.

Master Sommelier Madeline Triffon has created a stellar wine list including a broad selection

of champagnes and chardonnays. A cigar-friendly full bar, completely separated from the main non-smoking dining areas, has a handsome selection of fine cigars including the excellent Robusto and Corona Hamilton Reserve. There's dining for 12 in the bar. Hey, why not, the ambiance is Havana!

Local restaurants offer special New Year's Eve menus

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If you're planning to usher in the New Year with a celebratory dinner, most area restaurants are open New Year's Eve. The following have special menus, seatings and/or entertainment.

■ **Big Rock Chop & Brew House** - 245 S. Eton, Birmingham (248) 647-7774. Specials and favorite items from the regular menu plus crab legs and prime rib. A \$50 per person deposit is required. Got Rocks is limited to the first 60 guests and features a prix fixe, \$250 per person, menu including champagne and caviar.

■ **Clawson Steak House** - 58 S. Rochester Road (south of 14 Mile Road), Clawson, (248) 588-5788. Three seatings at 5 p.m., 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. will feature the same appetizers (\$7) and entree selections (\$16-35). Price ranges will be bumped somewhat higher at the last seating that includes party favors and live music.

■ **Excellibur** - 28876 Franklin Road, Southfield (corner of 12 Mile Road and Northwestern Highway), (248) 358-3365. Reserve a table early and receive service from the winter menu and daily special selections or start the evening at 9:30 p.m. for a four-course meal with five different entree selections. The \$75 (excluding beverage, tax and gratuity) per person dinner package also includes live entertainment with the Billy Rose Quartet, dancing and party favors. Advanced reservations required. If you'd like to extend festive moments to the first day of the new year, you can pick up a complete New Year's Day Dinner to Go. For \$110 the package feeds 6-8 and includes your choice of turkey, spiral-sliced honey-glazed ham or a standing bone-in prime rib roast and all the trimmings for a complete meal.

■ **Fox & Hounds** - 1560 North Woodward Ave., Bloomfield Hills, (248) 644-4800 will continue its tradition of offering a number of choices for your New Year's Eve celebration. In the main dining room and Pub, you can enjoy favorite dishes from the traditional dinner menu from 6 p.m. to midnight. In the Pub, it will be a party atmosphere with Randy Volin and The Sonic Blues playing their own style of classic and original blues beginning at 9 p.m. For a quieter venue, in the newly-renovated and refurbished banquet rooms, an intimate dinner for two or a party of 20 can enjoy the smooth swing, jazz and ballads performed by the Del Kauffman Trio from 9-11 p.m. while feasting on New Year's Eve Prime Rib and Shrimp Extravaganza \$34 per person.

■ **The Lark** - 6430 Farmington Road, West Bloomfield (248) 681-4466. Seatings are 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. All offerings are four-course prix-fixe ranging \$55 to \$82.60, dessert, tax and gratuity not included.

■ **Morton's of Chicago** - One Town Square, Southfield (248) 354-0006. Seatings at 5:30, 7:30 and 10 p.m. The regular menu includes every-known cut of steak as well as lamb and lobster. A \$25 per person deposit required.

■ **Oakland Grill** - 32832 Woodward Avenue (just south of 14

Mile Road), Royal Oak (248) 649-7700. Count on chef/owner Loui Sharkas for a special dinner menu at seatings from 3:00-7:00 p.m. Seating for a six-course degustation menu at \$125

per person is 9:30 p.m. You can choose from among six appetizers and eight entrees. From 10 p.m. until 2 a.m., vocalist Kathy Kosins accompanied by string bass and piano, will perform.

■ **Cafe Cortina** - 30175 W. 10 Mile Road, Farmington Hills, (248) 474-3033. Christmas Eve enchanted evening of music and warmth with a special menu, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 24;

\$58 per person; New Year's Eve - special menu, party favors, dancing, \$95 per person.

■ **Corale** - 27910 W. Seven Mile Road, Livonia, (313) 531-4960, New Year's Eve Family

Buffet, 5-9 p.m., adults \$7.75, senior citizens, \$7.50; children under 10, \$4.75. Includes two homemade soups, salad and dessert bar, homemade lasagna and other surprises.



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