

DINING

Reel in great eats at Flying Fish Tavern

BY ELEANOR HEALD
SPECIAL WRITER

Area restaurant trend setter Matt Prentice and his Unique Restaurant Corp. couldn't sit on the number 13 very long. He opened Flying Fish Tavern in West Bloomfield, restaurant number 14, last week. Area foodies can reel in some great eats on Orchard Lake Road, most affectionately dubbed "restaurant row."

Architectural and design talents of Birmingham-based Marc Therrian removed any trappings of former eateries at this location. Capital infusion allowed conversion from well water, formerly serving the site, to city water that now tastes good. Bright colors from floor to ceiling give Flying Fish an up-tempo feeling. Well-placed sound breakers reduce noise when the place is going full tilt. Those clouds on the ceiling — they're acoustical tiles.

Flying Fish is about food; good food at modest prices. But it's more than that. It's a place families will enjoy. Kid Stuff has its own menu spot. Little Tavern Burger with Fries, Grilled Cheese with Fries, Chicken Tenders or Pasta Marinara are served with a bottle of root beer for kids 12 and under. A game room in back makes children of all ages happy. Sports fans won't miss a down, face-off, slam dunk or homerun. TV monitors carry Fox Sports programming.

Flying Fish is also a gathering spot, a place to kick back with friends, after work or later in the evening. There are 40 brews, eight on draft served in 16-ounce mugs, 1/2 yard or yard. Atwater Brewery has made a suds special, exclusively for Flying Fish. American-style pilseis, international lagers and ales are available by the bottle. Woodchuck Hard Cider (sparkling cherry) and non-alcoholic brews are among the broad selections.

URC's wine director Madeline Trifon has made her imprint with modest, but savvy, value-oriented wine selections.

Frequenters to Tavern on 13 in Beverly Hills may see some similarities in the menu, but Flying Fish has its unique items. Two appetizers make their debut: Lobster & Shrimp Spring Roll served with ginger-garlic oil and honey mustard sauces \$8 and Veggie Chili, billed as a chili

Flying Fish Tavern

Where: 6480 Orchard Lake Road, (corner of Maple Road) West Bloomfield (248) 865-8088.

Hours: 11 a.m. to 1 a.m. Monday-Thursday; 11 a.m. to 2 a.m. Friday and Saturday; 3 p.m. to midnight Sunday.

Menu: Casual neighborhood family eatery serves comfort foods with special focus on fresh catches of the day. Cost: Appetizers and dinner salads \$4-8; sandwiches and burgers \$5.50-7; pastas \$7-9; big plates, specials and catch of the day \$9-16; desserts \$2-4.

Reservations: For parties of six or more only. Credit cards: All majors accepted.

carnivores will love. It comes topped with sour cream, scallions, Jack and cheddar cheeses \$4.50.

New on the burger scene is Whitefish Burger made with Fresh Lake Superior Whitefish served with lettuce, tomato and horseradish dill cream \$8.50. To eat light, try it instead of a turkey burger. Two sandwiches are flavorful newcomers: Grilled Garden Vegetable Wrap \$7 and Ahi Tuna Melt, prepared from fresh-grilled Ahi tuna, thick sliced tomato and melted cheddar, served open faced on grilled country bread \$7. All sandwiches are served with dill and housemade potato chips. Chips from fresh roasted thinly sliced potatoes fried in canola oil are made on-premise daily. Tossed with Chef John's seasoning, they are addictive.

Having been trained by Matt Prentice, Detroit native Executive Chef John Arnold is a 12-year veteran of Unique Restaurant Corp. kitchens. He'll be busy because he doubles as executive chef and managing partner at Flying Fish and Tavern on 13.

"I like the tavern concept," he said. "For people on the go, we offer fast service, but not fast-food taste. The kitchen challenge is creating something inexpensive that tastes good."

Big Plates are guaranteed to be "everything bigger than life" except the check. Chef John has added to his very popular Tavern



Fresh fish: Executive Chef/Managing Partner John Arnold (left) and General Manager/Managing Partner Marc Forrest present Broiled Sole inside the new Flying Fish Tavern.

on 13 Southwestern Torte, Sizzling Steak or Chicken Fajitas \$11. Also good bets are the portion-sized pastas, all served with warm sourdough bread. A cup of soup, tavern or Caesar salad can be added for \$2.

Each day, a "Flight Arrivals" board, easily noticed upon entering the tavern, announces the day's fresh catches. The "flying and flight" theme underscores the fact that the kitchen daily receives fresh seafood, flown in from the best seaports across the United States. In the model of URC's Northern Lakes Seafood Company in Bloomfield Hills, all seafood is served with vegetable, fried rice and choice from three sauces: tropical fruit salsa, Beurre blanc or roasted garlic Provencal and can be prepared broiled,

grilled, sautéed, blackened or poached. But portions are downsized from those at Northern Lakes.

Special menu recognition has been given to URC's largest seafood purveyor, Foley's in Boston. So, when you see Foley's Boston Sole on the menu, you know the meaning.

"The reputation of Foley's for seafood compares to a Cadillac in the auto industry," URC's corporate chef Jim Barnett remarked. Man-up-front at Flying Fish Tavern is general manager Marc Forrest. Over the last three years, he has worked his way up from a server at Relish to a management position.

"Working tavern-style is fun because it's different every day," he noted. If you leave room,

Marc will convince you that Orzo Cheesecake is the best dessert! Flying Fish Tavern's mark on the area dining scene will be made with the freshest ingredients. Prices compete with national chains, but Flying Fish has personality on the floor, with competent and friendly wait staff, and in the food, made from scratch by Chef John and his kitchen crew.

No time to eat in? All items are available as take-outs.

EATING OUT IN THE SUBURBS

Just in case you missed it, or lost the paper. Here are some of the restaurants we've recently visited.

■ **Wood-Ruff's** - Where: 212 W. Sixth St., Royal Oak, (248) 596-1519. Hours: Monday through Saturday 4 p.m. to 2 a.m., Sundays 4-9 p.m. Menu: Modern culinary twists on classics such as steaks, chops, duck and seafood served in a highly stylized, adult supper club atmosphere where jazz is king of sound. Cost: Starters \$3-7. Entrees \$14-24 accompanied by salad, starch as appropriate and vegetable garnish. Reservations: Recommended. Credit cards: All majors accepted.

Steve Woodruff believed downtown Royal Oak needed a restaurant catering to a mature audience who appreciate excellent food, exceptional service and great live jazz.

■ **O'Grady's Irish Pub** - 585 W. Big Beaver, Troy, (adjacent to the Drury Inn) (248) 524-4770. Open 11-2 a.m. Monday-Saturday; noon to 1 a.m. Sunday. Menu: Irish theme, emphasis on fresh is best. More than 75 menu items from Irish specialties to Hebrew National award-winning corned beef to deep-dish Chicago-style pizza with crispy crust are homemade. Cost: Starters and soups \$3-8; burgers and sandwiches \$5-8; Irish specialties \$10; chicken, seafood, beef and ribs \$8.50-16. Reservations: Not accepted. Credit cards: All majors accepted.

WHAT'S COOKING

■ **Morton's of Chicago** - Celebration of Single Malts & Cigars, 6:30 p.m. Friday, March 27, \$140 per person. Honey heather, smoky peat, a hint of sherry will be experienced in the exploration of fine single malt Scotch whiskies from the Highlands, Lowlands and Islands of Scotland along with Morton's classic cuisine and fine cigars. Dinner specialties include smoked Pacific salmon, beefsteak tomato salad, prime grilled lamb chops and ending sweet with creme caramel. Appropriate single malts and premium cigars round out the courses. Call (248) 354-6006 for reservations.

TUES.-SAT. SPECIAL
Fish & Chips
(baked or fried)
All you Can Eat
\$9.95
The Batsford Inn
Farmington Hills
(248) 474-4800

15th Annual Michigan Wildlife Art Festival
THING 98
MARCH 27-29
SOUTHFIELD PAVILION
(Exit 11 off I-96)

Festival Features:
• Hundreds of original and reproduced works
• Dozens of the best wildlife, landscape and environmental artists
• Free wildlife seminars
• Conservation Row
• Best Photographs in America (OWAA)
• Celebrity Decoy Painting and Auction
plus
ART FROM AFRICA

THE MIDWEST'S LARGEST JURIED WILDLIFE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ART SALE
Friday, March 27 4 p.m. - 9 p.m.
Saturday, March 28 10 a.m. - 8 p.m.
Sunday, March 29 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
FREE PARKING
Adults \$6, under 12 free
All proceeds to benefit wildlife through: Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation
6425 S. Pennsylvania, Suite 9 • Lansing, Michigan 48911
(517) 682-3630 • <http://www.mwhf.org>

Featured Artist
Russell Cobane
Spotlight Artist
Cranbrook Graduate
African Sculptor
Bruce Everly
Special Guest-African Artist
Dennis Curry
Special Guest-African Artist
Brian Jarvi

DON PEDRO'S
AUTHENTIC MEXICAN CUISINE
2436B Grand River
CARRY OUT (248) 537-1450
MARGARITA MADNESS
\$1.25
BANQUET FACILITIES
From 25 People • Up
Home Of The Best
\$7.95
American / Mexican
Banquet Buffet
\$3.79 LUNCH SPECIALS
MEXICAN SAMPLER FOR TWO \$10.95
Includes: Steak Fajitas, 2 Salsas, Cheese Enchiladas, 10 Ruffles, Burrito, Tostitos, Beans & Rice.
Dine-In • Coupon Expires 4/2/98
Not valid with any other offer.

MITCH HOUSEY'S
Open 11 A.M.
Businessmen's Lunches
FROM \$5.95
FASHION SHOW
Thursday
Starting at Noon
PRIME RIB DINNER
\$12.95
Includes: Sautéed Potatoes, Vegetable and Hot Bread
NOW APPEARING...LIVE THE SHOWCASEMEN
WEDNESDAY through SATURDAY
COCKTAIL HOUR
MIDNIGHT through 2 A.M.
BANQUET FACILITIES AVAILABLE
21500 Selma/Clark • Opposite Fairlane Inn • Livonia
(255) 5520 • OPEN DAILY MON. SAT. & THUR. 11 A.M. - 11 P.M.

Howie Mandel In The Round
Seats As Low As \$12.50
Thursday, April 23 • 8pm
ON SALE NOW
34.7 WEEK
THE LITTLE THEATRE
TICKETS AVAILABLE AT THE PALACE BOX OFFICE AND ALL FINE ARTS THEATRES
Call (248) 644-1111

NEW SHOW
The Second City
"Down Riverdance"
"The Second City Cast"
Tix (313) 965-2222
SHOWS WEDNESDAY - SUNDAY
Wed., Thur. & Sun. ONLY \$10
LIVE COMEDY THEATRE
OPEN FOR LUNCH & DINNER
(313) 965-9500
Rijata
RESTAURANT
Next to the Fox Theatre