

DINING

Retired firefighters open their own 'Academy'

EATING OUT IN THE SUBURBS

Mike Reddy and George Riley jumped from fires to frying pans, when they opened Fire Academy Brewery & Grill in Westland.

"Both of us had numerous small companies in the community," said Riley who owns the recently opened restaurant with Reddy. "We were firefighters who rose up through the ranks. We were at the end of our career and wondered 'what are we going to do in our afterlife?' Neither of us had any restaurant business background, but we like people, and being involved in the community."

George, who retired as assistant fire chief after 26 years of service, is a homebrewer, and liked the idea of opening a brewpub. He and Mike, who have known each other for many years, sensed a need for a family restaurant in the area, and did their homework.

In 1995 they began laying the groundwork for what would become Fire Academy Brewery & Grill after retiring from the Westland Fire Department. They bought the building that houses their restaurant in May of 1997 and began renovating it.

"I have a great love for service and the community," said Reddy who is a retired Westland Fire Chief. "It's a nice way to be involved, you meet people, it's fun. We have a great atmosphere, something for everyone."

Fire Academy is like being at the station. You can even have dinner inside a former City of Birmingham fire truck. "The kids just love it," said Riley. "Their eyes light up."

Fire helmets and other memorabilia fill the walls, there's a colorful fire rescue mural painted by Scott Staples of Westland, and you can watch fire-related videos on TVs scattered throughout. "There's even one of my graduation from the fire academy," said Riley.

With an emphasis on quality, the menu offers everything from

Fire Academy Brewery & Grill

Where: 6877 N. Wayne Road, Westland, (734) 595-1988.
Hours: 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday-Wednesday; 11 a.m. to midnight, Thursday-Saturday; noon to 11 p.m. Sunday.
Menu: Something for everyone including hand-crafted beers and root beer, sandwiches, soup, salads, steaks, baby back ribs, chicken, shrimp, whitefish, and pasta. Children's menu available. **Cost:** Ranges from \$4.75 to \$5.95 for sandwiches, entrees \$7.95 to \$15.50.
Credit Cards: All majors accepted.
Reservations: Not accepted after 5 p.m. Very busy 5-9 p.m. Friday-Saturday, expect to wait.
Banquets: Able to serve up to 50 buffet style, or 45 sit down, inside a vintage fire truck. Reservations recommended well in advance. Parties are not scheduled on Friday and Saturday evening.



First Class: George Riley (left) and Chef Wally Green are dedicated to providing the "finest handcrafted beer, highest quality food, and the friendliest service in the world, with a really neat atmosphere," at the Fire Academy Brewery and Grill.

prime rib, New York Strip Steaks, barbecue shrimp, pasta dishes, and salads.

Wally Green, of Canton, formerly chef at the Mackinac Brewing Co. in Traverse City, put the menu together. A lot of the side dishes are prepared with beer brewed on the premises such as hand sliced onion rings "dipped in homemade Amber Ale beer batter and deep fried. Mushrooms and onions served with steaks are also ale grilled.

Homemade soups are offered daily, a cheddar ale, and of course, Fire Academy Chili. If you can't make up your mind try the soup sampler.

Salads are served with Euro-garden bread, the Dispatcher's Salad - mixed greens, mandarin

oranges, pecans, raspberry chicken, tossed in house raspberry vinaigrette dressing is popular with customers.

There are lots of burger combinations to choose from, all served with chips and a pickle spear. Entrees such as prime rib, baby back ribs and chicken are served with soup or salad. Euro-grain bread basket, and choice of baked potatoes, fries or seasoned rice. Pasta dishes are served with choice of soup or salad and bread basket.

"Rookies" can pick from chicken fingers, kid's ribs, kids fish and grilled cheese. They can even order a beer - Roakin Root Beer, a hand-crafted root beer brewed at the Fire Academy. Save room for a Root Beer

Float or one of the other scrumptious desserts.

Tye Owsley brews the six hand-crafted beers that are made and served at Fire Academy. They include Axe Ale - a blonde, light, smooth ale, Smoke-Eater Ale - a mild-bodied beer with a hint of clove & citrus, Maltese Cross Beer - a mild brown beer, Chief's Amber Ale - a medium-bodied beer, Indian Tank Ale - an intensely hopped ale, Fruity Wildfire Berry Beer, and Sergeant's Stout, a rich dark beer. For \$5 you can try a beer sampler of all six. Fire Academy serves six beers, and always has a seasonal specialty beer brewing, too. They have the capacity to brew 10 different beers. Before joining Fire Academy,

Owsley worked at the Stony Creek Brewery in Frankenthum. "We interviewed 35 people from around the world for the job," said Riley. "He was hands and shoulders above them. He brews a quality product."

They'd like to host a microbrew contest at the Fire Academy in the future, and an antique fire equipment show. Reddy and Riley are still actively involved in public service.

Riley is a police/fire commissioner for the City of Westland, and a Civil Service Commissioner.

Mike serves on the YMCA Board, and Mayor's Drug Task Force.

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

Arriba - Where: 314 St. Fourth St., Ann Arbor. Open: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday; 4-11 p.m. Saturday; 4-9 p.m. Sunday. Menu: Mexican restaurant emphasizing authentic regional Mexican dishes. **Cost:** Entrees, \$6.95-\$13.95; appetizers, \$4.95-\$5.75; salads, \$2.95-\$8.75. Reservations: For parties of six or more, call (734) 662-8485. Credit: All major credit cards.

Mountain King Chinese Restaurant - Where: 469 Old Woodward, Birmingham (248) 644-2913. Hours: 11 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Monday-Thursday; until 10:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday; noon to 9 p.m. Sunday. Menu: Mandarin, Szechuan and Cantonese specialties served at lunch and dinner. **Cost:** Lunch specials \$5-\$6. Dinner \$6.50-\$11. Multi-course family dinners for 2-6 people \$21-\$60. Reservations: Accepted. Credit cards: All majors accepted.

Flying Fish Tavern - Where: 6480 Orchard Lake Road, (corner of Maple Road) West Bloomfield (248) 865-8888. 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 \$4-5; sandwiches and burgers \$5.50-7; pastas \$7-9; big plates, specials and catch of the day \$9-15; desserts \$2-4. Reservations: For parties of six or more only. Credit cards: All majors accepted.

Wood-Ruff's - Where: 212 W. Sixth St., Royal Oak, (248) 586-1519. 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.

RESTAURANT SPECIALS

Restaurant Specials features restaurant openings and renovations, menu specials, and anniversaries. Send announcements to: Entertainment Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc., 36261 Scholerlaff, Livonia, MI 48150 or fax (734) 591-7279.

ON THE MENU

Chuck Muir Restaurants - Are offering their guests the world's largest crab legs through April 25. The King Crab legs being offered at Chuck Muir Restaurants come from Bristol Bay where harvesting of the King Crab is only allowed for two months out of the year in order to ensure their great size. This Alaskan delicacy is featured in a number of entrees during lunch and dinner including Live Maine Lobster stuffed with crabmeat imperial and broiled to a golden brown. Roasted Alaskan Halibut stuffed with crabmeat, topped with fresh asparagus and sauce. Boeuf Bourguignon, Clippino - a San Francisco style shellfish stew loaded with crabmeat, shrimp, mussels, clams and fresh fish. Corn Crepes filled with crabmeat and served with lobster cream sauce, and Broiled Atlantic Salmon stuffed with Jumbo Lump Crabmeat and smoked bacon. Chuck Muir Restaurants include Big Fish in Dearborn (313) 336-6360, Big Fish Too, Clawson (248) 588-8533, Gandy Dancer, Ann Arbor (734) 768-0592, Moriwether's,

Southfield (248) 358-1310, Seafood Tavern, West Bloomfield (248) 861-2251 and Charley's Crab, Troy (248) 879-2050. Prices for King Crab Legs range from \$28.95 for 16 ounces at Big Fish to \$33.95 at Charley's Crab in Troy.

Too Chez - 27155 Sheraton Drive (northwest corner of Novi Road and I-96), Novi. Executive Chef Greg Upshur prepares a special dinner 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 28, a multi-course feast, featuring vegetarian dishes that make a macrobiotic diet deli-

cious and healthy. Cost is \$32 per person (tax and gratuity not included), call (248) 348-5555 for reservations/information.

HONORS

AAA Four-Diamond Winners - Tribute Restaurant, 31425 W. 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills, and The Lark, 6430

Farmington Road, West Bloomfield, recently earned AAA's Four-Diamond designation. This is the Lark's eighth consecutive AAA Four-Diamond Award.

New Role - Keith Famine, Executive Chef of Forte Restaurant in Birmingham will assume a new role as Consulting Chef of

Epoch Restaurant Group on May 1.

In his new role, Famine will work with the marketing division of the company where he will support their public relations efforts by expanding his involvement in television-related programming and promotion.

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