

DINING

Steve and Rocky's working to beat dining expectations

BY ELEANOR & RAY HEALD
SPECIAL WRITERS

When two high-profile chefs become partners and open a new restaurant, dining expectations run high.

"We're out to beat diners' expectations," chef/owner/partner Rocky Rachwitz of the new Steve and Rocky's stated confidently.

Chef Rocky's reputation developed during his over 17 years with the C.A. Muer Corporation, owner of popular seafood eateries, not only in Michigan, but as far south as Florida. In 1992, Rachwitz opened Rocky's in Northville and in 1995, Rocky's in Brighton.

Chef Steve Allen was among the fortunate to have trained in an apprentice program with legendary and now retired Chef Miles Cihelka at the Golden Mushroom in Southfield. He succeeded his mentor and spent 15 years working culinary magic at the Golden Mushroom until he left in June to devote his time to the new venture Steve & Rocky's, a total renovation of the former Fuddrucker's fast-food burger operation at the south end of the Novi Town Center.

This Ron Resa designed theme with no less than 13 colors may be his most unusual restaurant sculpting.

The colorful theme extends beyond walls, carpeting and table tops to the Eddie Bauer shirts in a spectrum of hues worn by servers. Bistro aprons and club ties add a note of team spirit and a "we care" attitude that is refreshing.

Steve & Rocky's
Where: 43150 Grand River Avenue, Novi (248) 374-0888.
Hours: Lunch 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Saturday; Dinner 4-10 p.m., Monday-Thursday; until 11 p.m., Friday and Saturday; noon to 8 p.m. Sunday (dinner).
Menu: Serious food with a seafood emphasis in a colorful, casual atmosphere. Raw bar and tapas bar.
Cost: Starters \$3.25-\$9. Main courses and specials average \$16.
Reservations: Accepted.
Credit cards: All majors accepted.

Heading the team of servers, who trained and tested them, is general manager Joe Crowell, formerly of Paint Creek Cider Mill & Restaurant.

"The team of servers is ready to impress and beat the expectations of diners," Crowell said. "They know the reputation that precedes here and they're ready to 'wow' diners."

The bar is both striking and handsome with its wooden top. Resa has worked in "little heartfelt touches of Steve's" such as the stained-glass windows above the wine cellar. And as warmer weather allows seasonal changes in the menu, much of the fresh produce will come from farmer Steve and his extensive organic garden in Fenton. In the past, it has supplied picked-up freshness for the Golden Mushroom, Birmingham's Big Rock Chop & Brew House, Novi's Too Chez

and the Rocky's restaurants.

Since you know the theme is principally seafood, you may be surprised at the rooster gracing the daily-dated menu. But there's an explanation: "Many cultures hold the rooster in high esteem as a symbol of integrity, confidence and individual strength. To us the rooster stands for the farm, and the roots of American cooking. We chose the rooster as our inspiration in using only the freshest ingredients to provide you simple food done well." Signed Steve & Rocky.

Rocky readily admits that the menu is nearly "all Steve." And Steve describes it as "not overly contrived and concentrating on flavors." An example is a 9-oz Filet Mignon with a deep, rich Burgundy sauce and creamy smashed new potatoes, caramelized onions, braised portabella mushrooms and vegetable garnish \$21. But in seafood, in addition to broiled scrod, Great Lakes whitefish au gratin, salmon, perch, gulf shrimp and lobster fettuccine or grilled yellowfin tuna steak, there's Bouillabaisse with gulf shrimp, mussels, clams, sea bass, salmon and Maine lobster!

Where did Steve Allen come up with this southern France specialty? He's not forgotten an early southern France externship in Eugene-les-Bains!

Grilled vegetable cake or potato dumplings with wild mushrooms and asparagus offer meatless options. For those not in the mood for seafood, there's lightly



Toasting success: Chef/owner/partner Rocky Rachwitz (left) and Chef Steve Allen inside Steve and Rocky's.

smoked roast range chicken in herb sauce, roasted duck or pan-seared spice-rubbed veal chop.

Many restaurants have wine and/or beer samplers. At Steve & Rocky's, it's a soup sampler with about a 3-oz tasting of each of three soups. Colorful cups come in their own ceramic server. Put this together with a tast-

ing of tapas and have a feast.

Sampling wine at Steve and Rocky's will be a treat.

The list of high-profile producers, mainly California, is smartly organized by varietal and intensity (light body or full-bodied). Eighteen wines by the glass offer an opportunity to taste many of the 100 wines.

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:

■ **Local Color Brewing Company** - 42705 Grand River Ave., (next to Vic's Market) Novi, (248) 349-2600. Open: 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 a.m. seven days a week. Menu: Classic American fare including steaks, ribs, seafood, and chicken with a Bavarian touch. Wood fired pizzas, salads, pub style sandwiches, appetizers and soups. Cost: Entrees range from \$8.25 to \$19.95; sandwiches \$5.85 to \$6.99; salads \$7.50 to \$9.95. Children's menu available. Reservations: For parties of eight or more except on weekends. Highlights: Microbrews, housemade root beer. An outdoor beer garden will open soon with seating for 70 people. Restaurant seats: 300.

■ **Champps Americana** - 19470 Haggerty Road, (between Seven and Eight Mile Roads), Livonia, (734) 691-3334. Open 11 a.m. to 1:30 a.m. Monday-Saturday; 10 a.m. to midnight Sunday. Sunday brunch menu 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Menu: Classic American dining including salads, sandwiches, pasta, chicken, steaks, seafood, pizza and hamburgers. Children's and late night menu available. Cost: Entrees \$9.95 to \$14.50; sandwiches \$6.25 to \$10.50; burgers \$4.75 to \$6.95; pizza \$6.50 to \$8.25. Sunday brunch items range from \$6.95 to \$9.95. Reservations: Not accepted. Credit cards: All majors accepted. Scheduled to open a Troy location in July.

■ **Highlights: Magician performs 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sundays during brunch. Bloody Mary Bar 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturdays, noon to 3 p.m. Sundays. Specialty martini menu.**

■ **Mountain King Chinese Restaurant** - Where: 489 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-\$8. Dinner \$5.50-\$11. Multi-course family dinners for 2-9 people \$21-\$80. 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; 9 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 \$7.99; 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.

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Starbucks opens two new stores, helps Gilda's Club

PRNewswire - Starbucks Coffee Company will open two new stores in Royal Oak and Farmington on Saturday, May 16.

A portion of proceeds sold during the grand openings will be donated to Gilda's Club Metro Detroit, a free cancer support community. The charity named in honor of the late Detroit native and comedienne, Gilda Radner.

The downtown Farmington Starbucks can be found at 31399 Grand River, near the corner of Grand River and Farmington Road, in the Farmington Center.

Hours for the downtown Farmington store are 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Friday, 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Saturday and 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Sunday. The phone number is (248) 476-5411.

The downtown Royal Oak Starbucks is at 300 South Main Street on the southwest corner of Main and Third, close to B.D.'s Mongolian Barbeque.

Hours for the downtown Royal Oak store are 6 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 6 a.m. to 1 a.m. on Friday, 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Saturday and 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Sunday. The phone number is (248) 548-4570.

Grand Opening Celebrations

Between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Saturday, May 16, customers can stop by the new Royal Oak and Farmington stores for samples of coffee and espresso beverages, including icy Frappuccino blended beverage, delicious pastries, entertainment and demonstrations of home brewing equipment.

There are eight other Detroit-

area Starbucks:

- **Birmingham** - 135 South Woodward
- **Dearborn** - 22155 Michigan Avenue in West Village
- **Southfield** - 29999 Northwestern Highway
- **Troy** - The Somerset Collection North; 1921 East Big Beaver
- **West Bloomfield** - 6765 Orchard Lake Road.

RESTAURANT SPECIALS

Restaurant Specials features restaurant openings and renovations, menu specials, and anniversaries. Send announcements to: Entertainment Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc., 30251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150 or fax (734) 591-7279.

New restaurant openings

■ **Unique Restaurant Corporation** will open Portabella in Somerset Collection on Friday, May 15, and Duet in Detroit (next to Orchestra Hall) Thursday, May 28. For information about Portabella, call (248) 649-6625.

■ **Unique Restaurant Corporation** is hosting their annual Morel Feast Wednesday, May 20 through Saturday, May 23. The cost is \$42.95 not including tax or gratuity. The menu features a brique of Minnesota morels, Michigan pickers in puff pastry with a Morel Duxelle and Morel Infused Fumet, Salad with sautéed Michigan Morels, Roasted prime tenderloin with morel sauce, Michigan asparagus and Morel Risotto, and warm Michigan cherry tart for dessert. Call the restaurant of your choice for

reservations/information, each feast begins at 6:30 p.m. The feast will be held May 20 at Morels, 30100 Telegraph, Bingham Farms, (248) 642-1094; May 21 at No. VI Chop House & Lobster Bar, inside Hotel Baromette, 30100 Telegraph, Bingham Farms, (248) 642-1094; May 22 at Relish, 34555 W. 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills, (248) 489-8852, and May 23 at Portabella, (248) 649-6625.

Benefits

■ **Fanclub Foundation for the Arts** presents a fundraiser featuring a celebrity silent wine auction, hors d'oeuvres by the Townsend Hotel, and live band, 7:30 p.m. Thursday, May 14. Tickets, \$35, call (248) 988-0-FAN.

■ **Fifty-year celebration** - Andiamo Restaurants and Charles Krug Winery will be presenting a 50-year celebration of gourmet food and wine 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 20 at the Andiamo Banquet Center in Warren. The six course meal will include specialty dishes by chefs from each of the Andiamo Restaurants and six Charles Krug wines selected to complement the cuisine. Entertainment

will be provided by Johnny Trudell and his Orchestra with guest vocalist Chrissy Scinta. Tickets are \$125 per person, call (800) 287-8880 or (248) 642-0300.

The event will honor Andiamo's Master Chef Aldo Ottaviani, and Peter Mondavi, Sr., President and CEO of Charles Krug Winery whose 50 year friendship and shared passion for good food and wine has led to success for both of them. Chef Aldo will be the first restaurateur to import Charles Krug wines into metro Detroit area.

The celebration will also benefit future students of culinary arts. Partial proceeds from the evening will be used to inaugurate scholarships at Macomb Oakland Community, and Schoolcraft Community Colleges.

Additional money will be raised at an auction of fine and rare wines conducted by Ed Jonna.

■ **Habitat Works** - Taste over 60 international wines selected by John Jonna and John Lissia of Merchant's Fine Wines and cuisine from some of the countries in which Habitat Works 7 p.m. Friday, May 29 at the Detroit Yacht Club on Belle Isle. Event proceeds benefit Habitat for Humanity - Detroit. Tickets range from \$100 to \$5,000, black tie optional. Call (313) 521-6691 for information.

Wine tasting

Mon Jin Lau - and Merchant's Fine Wine presents Wine & Wok, a walk around tasting with great wines and foods from Merchant's Fine Wines and Nu-Asian appetizers from Mon Jin

Lau, 6:30 p.m. Monday, May 18. Tickets \$40 per person, limited seating, call (248) 546-7700, (313) 563-8700, or (248) 689-2332.

■ **Tribute** - Master of wine Tim Hanni of Beringer Vineyards and creator of the Beringer Progressive Wine List System, and Takanashi Yagihashi, executive chef of Tribute, present a dinner featuring the 4-star cuisine of Chef Takanashi matched with hard to find Beringer wines including the 1994 Howell Mountain Merlot and 1984 Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon, 6:45 p.m. Thursday, May 21 at the restaurant, 31425 W. 12 Mile Road (at Orchard Lake Road) Farmington Hills. The cost is \$126 per person and gratuity included) call (248) 548-9393.

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