

FOR THE LOVE OF FOOD



CHEF RICK HALBERG

Chefs gather to cook at Tapawingo

Nine or ten years ago, a tradition started at Tapawingo, a really great restaurant in Ellsworth, a beautiful little town in Northern Michigan. The event is called "The Michigan Chef's Dinner," and each year a group of chefs from around the state are asked to come and prepare one of several courses for this truly great dinner.

For all of those years I have been asked to participate, and for all but one, I have. The one year I couldn't was the year I opened Emily's. Tapawingo is owned and operated by Chef Pete Peterson who is one of our country's finest chefs. In recent years "Tap" has received many national awards including "Gourmet" magazine and "Zagat".

For the last years, Pete has been a finalist for the James Beard award for best chef in the Midwest.

The restaurant is on a rolling expanse of beautifully manicured lawns and gardens that stops at a pristine, calm, tiny lake. All dining room tables have a view of this tranquil setting.

Tapawingo is a really romantic dining haven. The food is called "Modern American Cuisine," and under that umbrella they are able to take the best products available and turn them into some of the finest dishes available anywhere.

Host

Pram Acharya is the host and cellar master. His sincere warmth and hospitality will set you at ease immediately. His impressive knowledge of the wines in his extensive cellar will enable even the novice wine drinker to find just the right bottle. Many of the well trained wait staff at Tapawingo have been with Pete since he opened 15 years ago. Executive Chef Rich Travis has also been with Pete for several years. Rich is one of the many unsung heroes in our culinary world. During the busy season, Rich has to manage a kitchen staff that seems to grow every year. With the level of cuisine being what it is at Tap, this is no easy feat. Each dish leaves the kitchen on impeccably clean and perfectly garnished plates. My hat goes off to all of you.

Fun work

This year's dinner was held Sunday, June 7, and I must say it was one of the best, and most fun ever. Returning chefs included Brian Polcyn from Five Lakes Grill in Millford, Tanya Fallon from Tribute in Farmington Hills, Michael Turna, the only one of us to have never missed a year, from Cafe Edward in Midland, and Joseph and Mary Stelson, back for their second year from Cafe Appell in Bay City. Joining us for the first year were Christian Schmidt from the Ritz Carlton in Dearborn and All Barker from The Bistro on the Boulevard in St. Joseph.

We are all invited to come up north on Saturday evening with our spouses or a guest, for a special dinner with great wines at the restaurant, and our lodging is taken care of for a couple of nights in Charlevoix.

Usually, all of the chefs and their helpers show up in the kitchens by noon Sunday to get ready for the always sold-out crowd of about 100 guests who will be arriving for hors d'oeuvres by 5 p.m. Brian brings his son Alex to help, and my assistant was my pastry chef Michael Laisko.

The mood is generally pretty relaxed, but electric. For me, because I have done this so many times, I know what to expect, and I am always pretty well prepared. The new guys are usually more nervous. There is always a good deal of teasing and kidding about coffee selection and grape varieties, with us.

Please see FOOD, B2

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Recipes to Share
- Chefs for Beer

COUPLE EXPANDS THEIR PASTABILITIES



Industrious couple: James and Lisa Fahlman of L&J Imports are the exclusive national distributors of Mama Mucci products. They offer more than 300 items.

Problem is just another word for challenge, and sometimes finding solutions to other people's problems can solve your own problems, too.

That's what James and Lisa Fahlman of Canton, founders of L&J Imports, the exclusive national distributor of Mama Mucci's products, are discovering.

James is the product manager for Mama Mucci's Pasta, a Canton based business that manufactures a variety of fresh, frozen and dry pasta products, pasta sauce, virgin olive oil, and other products. Most of Mama Mucci's customers are restaurants.

A former chef, James knows a lot about restaurants. In fact, he and Lisa met at Ernesto's in Plymouth. They married, and have three girls ranging in age from 10 months to 3 1/2.

"I wanted to be home to see them grow, and the restaurant hours were killing me," he said. "Frank and Vince Mucci needed

L&J Imports

WHAT: Exclusive national distributor of over 300 Mama Mucci products.
FOR INFORMATION: Call (734) 394-1620 or (888) 422-1620 for product/price list. You can also visit their web site <http://members.aol.com/lahman/index.html>. Their e-mail address is LImports@aol.com
MINIMUM ORDER: Products available from 2 pound packages up to 10 and 20 pound package sizes (depending on choice of item). Sent UPS. Mastercard and Visa accepted.

someone to manage production. I've known the family for nine years, and have worked for them for almost a year."

James is interested in new technology, and thought the Internet would be a great tool to market Mama Mucci's Pasta Products to consumers. A limited number of products are available at Vic's, Westborn, Plymouth Marketplace, and other special-

ty markets, but most of them are sold to restaurants. He and Lisa buy the product wholesale, and pass the savings along to customers.

"James has always been eager to do something," said Frank Mucci, vice president of operations. "We didn't have enough time to set up a web site. James presented his idea, and was more than willing to help me so we can concentrate on what we do best, make pasta. James knows all of our pasta products."

Lisa graduated from Sienna Heights College, but because of the high cost of daycare, it wasn't feasible for her to work outside the home, after her children were born. With L&J Imports she can focus on her girls, and use her business skills.

"It's good for our girls growing up to see mom and dad working together," said Lisa

Please see PASTABILITIES, B2

Work up an appetite for 'Gone With the Wind'

Southerners are known for their old-fashioned hospitality. Margaret Mitchell describes some of the balls and barbecues in her famous novel, "Gone With the Wind," which David O. Selznick made into a film in 1939.

The film is being re-released Friday, June 26 by New Line Cinema with state-of-the-art innovations that improve the color, sound, picture quality and theatrical presentation.

To celebrate the event, Janis Levin-Gorelick and Chef Jeff Swider of Classic Cuisine Catering in Farmington Hills are catering a sold-out, by-invitation-only Southern tea party and pre-

miere screening at the Star Southfield Theatre. The Star Theatre is one of 200 theaters nationwide to feature the restored film. The event is being hosted by the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers and WOMG Oldies 104.3 FM.

Tiffany Florist and the Star Southfield. "Gone With the Wind" is four hours long - make a day of it - and plan to have your own Southern style tea with friends afterward to discuss the movie.

"They used a lot of mint," said Gorelick. Food presentations also included pecans, maple syrup and lemons. "They tried to be very genteel: Women didn't appear to eat, that was proper. They

copied what they thought was sophisticated and polite English society and incorporated it with what they had."

Classic Cuisine Catering's tea menu includes Cucumber Mint Tea Sandwiches, Smoked Turkey & Ham with watercrest Butter Tea Sandwiches, Maple Pecan Scones, Bourbon Balls, Pecan Tartlets with cinnamon cream, Chocolate Truffle Cookies, Miniature Lemon-Poppy Muffins, Lemon-Mint Iced Tea and Fresh Fruit Punch.

Scarlett O'Hara, if you remember from the movie, didn't hide her

Please see APPETITE, B2



Center of attention: Vivien Leigh as Scarlett O'Hara is the center of attention at a party at Twelve Oaks, the nearby Wilkes Plantation in "Gone With the Wind."

Alsace wines complement lighter summer foods

BY ELEANOR & RAY HEALD
SPECIAL WRITERS

Alsace in eastern France, not far from the Rhine River and the German border, is a picturesque wine region. The Wine Route winds for 76 miles along the eastern slopes of the Vosges mountains, ... hillsides and along deep valley floors. It is a light-hearted land of contrasts with flower-decked villages steeped in history. Here, grapes ripened on sunny hillsides make perfect summertime wines.

In Alsace, mysterious castles overlook the plain where paths run right through the vineyards. Wine taverns in half-timbered buildings and ancient cobble streets create a poetic atmosphere



Proud tradition: The name Schlumberger proudly marks one of its domaine vineyards in the Alsace region of France.

that is somehow magically transferred to the wines of the region. In this idyllic setting, one finds the ancient vineyards, originally planted by the Romans, and ageless traditions of Domaines Schlumberger.

After the French Revolution, a small

land holding was purchased by local mill owner Nicolas Schlumberger. Today, sixth-generation heirs own and cultivate 334 acres of vineyards, spread contiguously over four miles on the steep flanks of the Vosges Mountains. The Schlumberger vineyards are the largest in Alsace and one of the largest contiguous vineyard blocks in France. Schlumberger is also distinguished as owner of the largest acreage of Alsace grand cru vineyards.

Alsace wines are the French exception. They are labeled by grape name just like domestic wines. This makes them easy to understand, but this is

Please see WINES, B2