

If you're too busy to cook, try The Intelligent Chicken

BY ELEANOR HEALD
SPECIAL WRITER

Pleased for time to eat well? The holidays bring this on! Take-out often becomes a high-fat, high-calorie, high cholesterol solution. Unless you discover The Intelligent Chicken in Farmington Hills.

Perhaps you remember the name. A 1992 graduate of Michigan State University with a degree in Hotel & Restaurant Management, owner Todd Rones first opened The Intelligent Chicken in 1993 at Crosswinds Mall, West Bloomfield. When the mall underwent a multi-million dollar renovation, his lease was bought out by the management and he moved on to other entrepreneurial ventures outside the world of restaurants.

Relocation to Northwestern Highway last month allowed Rones to double the size of his eatery and thereby expand dine-in and catering capabilities.

While take-out is the specialty, dine-in seating for about 40 is available in comfortable, light, simple surroundings, reflecting the essence of The Intelligent Chicken's food items. Eat-in service is cafeteria style with plastic plates and flatware, in an area well away from the carry-out counter.

Rotisserie chicken is marinated in house-made barbecue sauce, then slow roasted. Its sumptuous natural flavors don't need a sauce, but you can have your choice from among honey mustard, garlic and herb, or Dijon mustard.

Orders of rotisserie chicken serving two or more with side dishes and rolls are intelligently named for the three oldest Detroit high schools, Mumford, Cass Tech, and Central. The Mumford is the most popular, "only because it serves two to

The Intelligent Chicken

Where: 32431 Northwestern Highway, Farmington Hills, between Middlebelt and 14 Mile Road (248)855-4455.

Open: Monday-Friday 11 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. Saturday until 3 p.m., Sunday 4-9:30 p.m.

Menu: Carry-out or deliver and dine-in restaurant featuring natural ingredient marinated, low-fat char-broiled or rotisserie chicken plus fresh salads, sandwiches, side dishes, and soups.

Cost: Average \$5-6 per person without soft drink.

Credit cards: All majors accepted.

Details: All items carry-out. Two-item kid's menu. Catering and corporate lunches.

three, a popular size," Rones explains.

The Intelligent Chicken specializes in low-fat, great-tasting canola oil based marinated boneless, skinless char-broiled chicken breasts, served with the same three sauces mentioned above. This time, portions for two or more are named for the three largest suburban high schools, not named after their city: Andover, Lahser, and Harrison. For the same reason as The Mumford, The Andover is the favorite.

Chef Andy Brenner also offers salads, sandwiches, side dishes, and two homemade soups, Mom's Chicken Noodle and Grandma's Minestrone. "Mom" is Todd Rones mother Rona and it is her recipe with broad noodles, carrots, celery, parsley, and generous chunks of chicken.

"If you're chickened out, there's minestrone," Rones quipped.

Not on the regular menu, but running as a special some days is Chicken Chili without beans. With chunky tomatoes, onions, and plenty of pulled chicken, it's a twist on the standard with a light level of spicing. Brenner sometimes makes a batch with beans, so ask.

If you crave a burger, the ostrich is the intelligent chick-

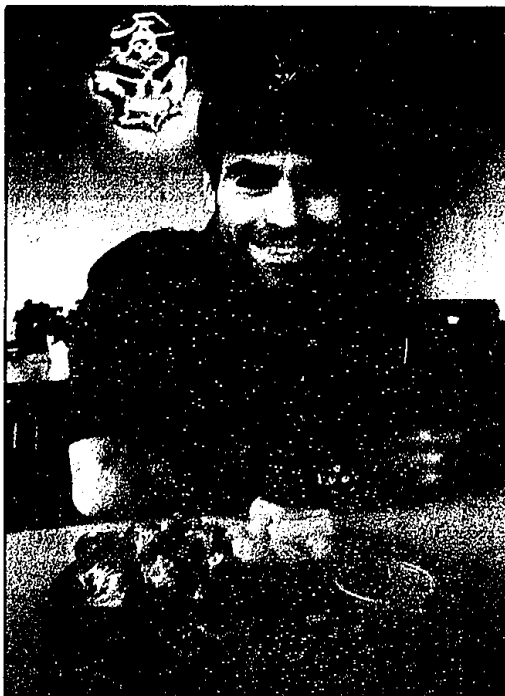
en's other feathered friend. Marinated in a beef marinade, then grilled to sear in great taste, the Big Bird Burger, served on a Kaiser roll, is a way to eat flavorful red meat with less fat and cholesterol.

For chickadees (the kids!), two items including a kiddie side, soft drink or milk, and a surprise are available. Chicken Little Special is a char-broiled half chicken breast. Baked Chicken Nuggets come with honey mustard dipping sauce. Booster chairs are available.

The Intelligent Chicken has Michigan restaurant exclusivity to carry and sell the popular Mucky Duck Mustard, which could, up to now, be found only in specialty grocery stores.

Intelligent Lunch in a Box is a brainy idea for busy executives needing tasty corporate lunches. The Intelligent Chicken is computer savvy and ready for E-commerce on line at www.food.com. Once logged on, go to Detroit, then the Intelligent Chicken to place an order.

Eleanor Heald is a Troy resident who writes about dining, food and wine for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. To leave her a voice mail message, dial (734) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, mailbox 1864.



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BAKER

Smart choice: Todd Rones presents The Intelligent Chicken's specialty, low-fat, marinated boneless, skinless char-broiled chicken breasts, served with a flavorful sauce and your choice of side dishes.

WHAT'S COOKING

Send items for consideration in What's Cooking to Kelly Wygonik, Entertainment Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 30251 Schooner, Livonia MI 48150. To fax: (734) 591-2279 or e-mail kwygonik@oe.com.

What's Cooking includes listings of new restaurants, special dinners, menu changes, restaurant anniversaries and renovations.

■ **Millennium white wine** — If you read about the special millennium white wine Galilee 2000, hailing from the Galilee in Israel, in O&E's AT HOME holiday section on Oct. 21, and have not been able to find it, it's available for about \$10 at Cloverleaf Fine Wines, Applegate Square, Spitzer's Books & Gifts, Eleven Mile Road at Lahser, Borenstein Books & Gifts, 10 Mile Road at Greenfield, and Big Ten Party Store, Ann Arbor. However, any retail wine shop can order the wine for you from the distributor Regal Wines in Dearborn.

■ **Millennium Celebration** — Friday, Dec. 31 at Morels, 30100 Telegraph Road, Bingham Farms. Cost is \$250 per person, plus tax and gratuity, evening dress suggested, black tie optional. Call (248) 642-1094, Ext. 3 for reservations. Menu features Ahi Tuna Carpaccio, Maine Lobster Ravioli, Pan-seared Palmetto Squab, slow-roasted prime tenderloin and Calibaut bittersweet chocolate soufflé.

■ **Taste of the Arts** — An evening of food, art and classical music 6 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 30 at the Hellenic Cultural Center, 38315 Joy Road, between Wayne and Newburgh, Westland. Tickets \$20 in advance, \$25 at the door. Call (734) 326-7222 for information. "Taste of the Arts" will feature samplings of food and beverages from more than 20 local businesses. Event benefits the Family Resource Center and the Westland Chamber of Commerce. Sponsored by the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers and other local businesses.

■ **Red Robin** — Restaurants in Madison Heights, Novi, and Westland, will be selling mini versions of its mascot "Red" the robin for \$1.99 with kids' meals through Dec. 31, or until supplies last. The restaurant is selling the "Mini Red" in honor of its redesigned mascot, making its debut in the restaurants this month. Red Robin will donate \$1 of each Mini Red toy sale to the *Canadian Communities for Independence*. For more information, visit www.redrobin.com.

■ **Ristorante Claro** — Newly opened, cozy 80-seat Italian restaurant, 1024 Monroe St., south of Michigan Ave., Dear-

born. House specialty is wood-fired, thin crust pizzas baked in a wood burning oven. Homemade pastas, veal and seafood dishes

also available. Open 5-11 p.m. Monday-Saturday for dinner. Call (313) 274-2426 for information.

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