

DINING

Area restaurants offer much that's new this autumn

BY ELEANOR HEALD  
SPECIAL WRITER

Keith Farnie departed and Birmingham's Forte restaurant has a new Executive Chef. Tim Voss spent the summer creating an innovative drive and focus for the menu.

"I've moved in the direction of more manageable menu offerings to raise the bar on quality," Voss said.

Voss spent 2 1/2 years at Tribute, another restaurant in the Epoch Enterprises portfolio, along with Forte and Too Chee. At Tribute, Voss worked with acclaimed Executive Chef Takashi Yagihashi.

Voss, a 28-year-old Wisconsin native, received his culinary training at Kendall College in Illinois. He moved to Michigan when Tribute opened and now enjoys the metro-Detroit area for its cultural and ethnic diversity.

"Diners in this area are well-traveled and know good food and wine," he said. "They also like to individualize their menu orders, but what's really great is that they are open to food experiments."

Perhaps experimental to Voss' way of thinking, but delicious to all are new menu additions such as Smoked Sturgeon Gallette, Crisp Roulade of Garlic Shrimp, Grilled Quail with Pistachio Glaze and Almond-crusted Scallops for appetizers.

Newly-inspired entrees are Gemelli with Prosciutto and Shrimp, Lemon Sole, Oven Roasted Salmon, Grilled Swordfish and Open Rib Eye Steak.

For those who loved the Paelin, it's still on the menu, but now includes a Forte house salad at the same price of \$22 per person.

Voss has teamed with Sommelier Michael Korn to choose an array of new wines, many of the hard-to-find elsewhere variety. The new, friendly, easy-to-use format in a clever binder is a welcome addition to a restaurant on the fast track of becoming a wine and food lover's destination.

Oakland County Dining

■ Forte: 201 S. Old Woodward, Birmingham (248) 594-7300 - Lunch Monday to Friday 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Dinner Monday to Wednesday 5-10 p.m., Thursday, Friday and Saturday until 11 p.m.

■ Charley's Crab: 5498 Crooks Road, Troy (248) 879-2060 - Lunch Monday to Friday 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Dinner Monday to Thursday 4-10 p.m., Friday until 11 p.m., Saturday 5-11 p.m., Sunday 2-9 p.m.

■ Flying Fish: 17600 W. 13 Mile Road, Birmingham (248) 647-7747 - Monday to Thursday and Sunday 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.; Friday and Saturday until midnight.

Charley's Crab

A \$500,000 Ren Ren-designed facility at Charley's Crab in Troy, Chuck Muer Restaurant Corporation's flagship restaurant, is stunning. Diners find much enhanced decor and new menu items created by Executive Chef Gary Tottis to emulate changes outside his kitchen.

The entrance has been reworked to include a new awning, porthole doors and a large wine cabinet holding 360 wine bottles at perfect cellar temperature. Caribbean blue windows, providing a sense of being under water, have replaced the clear exterior windows.

Guests continue to dine in a replica of the famous Macaulay mansion, but now, large blown glass jellyfish chandeliers appear to be swimming above the tables. Five-foot tall white trees painstakingly made from ocean shells, coral and sea urchins are "planted" in large urns throughout the room.

Highlighted with a pin spot-light, new aquamarine glass settings and large incandescent blue bowls of lemons, serving as centerpieces, are showcased.

"Our goal was not to change the restaurant, but to enhance it," said Roger Zingle, President of the Chuck Muer Restaurant



Great team: Sommelier Michael Korn (left) and Executive Chef Tim Voss choose an array of new wines for Forte. It's just one of the many changes made at the restaurant, which is on the fast track of becoming a wine and food lover's destination.

Corporation. "But at the same time, we had a long list of things we felt needed to be added to the concept to keep it dynamic and on the cutting edge among great seafood restaurants nationwide."

Among new dishes on that cutting edge are: Trest Seiche Tower, a three-tiered offering served in a coconut shell and El Nino Platter with typhoon Thai mussels, Avalanche oysters and Monsoon shrimp.

Unique Restaurant Corp.

Matt Prentice didn't let the grass grow under the feet of the Unique Restaurant Corporation during the summer. Success of his West Bloomfield Flying Fish, gave impetus to the remodeling of Birmingham's Tavern on 13 into the Flying Fish concept. The restaurant remains open, with remodeling being done at night. Prentice said Tavern on 13 will become Flying Fish on Friday, Oct. 2.

URC's Corporate Chef Jim Barnett can now be seen every

Saturday at 9:45 a.m. on WJBK, Fox 2 Morning News with Deena Centofanti. Barnett prepares a meal from a different URC restaurant each week, offering tips on everything from buying fish to creating the perfect upscale picnic. At this time of year, a lot of people call it a tailgate.

URC celebrates The Michigan Fall Feast Wednesday, Oct. 7 at Duet (313) 831-3838, Thursday, Oct. 8 at Morels (248) 642-1094, and Friday, Oct. 9 at No. VI Chop House (248) 305-5210. The cost is \$35.95 per person, not includ-

ing tax or gratuity. A wine package will be offered at additional cost. Each dinner will begin at 7 p.m.

The menu features Carried Cauliflower and apple soup, Smoked Sturgeon and Roasted Beet Salad, Potato-Crusted Salmon, Local Duckling Pot Au Feu, and John Ash's Apple Jack Tart.

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WHAT'S COOKING

Send items for What's Cooking to Keely Wygonik, Editor, Observer & Eccentric, 36261 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, fax (734) 591-7279 or e-mail, wygonik@oe.com

■ Zoupl - a new restaurant featuring a food concept parodied in the now-famous Seinfeld "Soup" episode, opens Monday, Sept. 28. The restaurant located at 29177 North-

western Highway at 12 Mile Road in the Franklin Plaza Shopping Center will be open 10:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. daily, call (248) 789-2800 for information.

Eric Ersher, Zoupl's spokesman said Zoupl is in direct response to what "people told us again and again - really good soup is hard to find." Zoupl's creators spent more than a year developing its 200 recipes. Zoupl offers a comfortable, relaxing atmo-

sphere. "A 16 ounce bowl of our soup - along with a hunk of one of our fresh-baked breads - is more filling and nutritious than most sandwiches," said Ersher.

■ Envoy Cafe - Is starting its fourth year at the Sinsbury Plaza, 33210 W. 14 Mile Road in West Bloomfield, (248) 855-6220. They offer casual dining in a cozy atmosphere. Check

out their new fall and winter menu. Entrees include Marinated Salmon, White Fish, Eggplant Neapolitan, Baja Chicken and Shrimp, and Wild Mushroom Pasta.

■ World Food Day - The Michigan Committee for World Food Day is sponsoring the 13th annual "Seven Percent Solution" to raise funds and awareness of those who go without meals in our state.

On Thursday, Oct. 15, participating restaurants will donate seven percent of that day's receipts to the Food Bank Council of Michigan and the Hunger Action Coalition. Participating restaurants include: Beau Jacks Food & Spirits, Buddy's Pizza, Diamond Jim Brady's, Marco's Dining & Cocktails, Star of India, Sweet Lor-

raine's Cafe and Unique Restaurant Corp. restaurants.

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