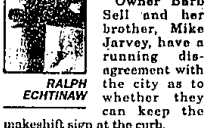


# Barb's pasties – delicious, hearty meal in a crust

**C**onsider yourself excused if you think the name of Barb's Copper Country Kitchen is "Barb's Pasties" because that's what the home-made (and illegal) sign out on Middlebelt Road in Livonia says.



**RALPH ECHTINAW**

Owner Barb Sell and her brother, Mike Jarvey, have a running disagreement with the city as to whether they can keep the makeshift sign at the curb. But there's no disagreement in my office about the quality of Barb's pasties.

"Ralph, you have to remark about this crust," exclaimed health and business reporter Renee Skoglund. "This is a marvelous crust, a glorious, blond crust." (Renee used to write restaurant reviews.)

Assistant Managing Editor Kelly Wygonik thought it was remarkable that the meat in her pastie had no gristle.

Sales Support Supervisor Linda Ripdon said her pastie "was like eating a bowl of hearty vegetable soup in a flaky pastry."

Internet Editor Emory Daniels was impressed that his pastie contained rutabaga. "With car-

## Barb's Copper Country Kitchen

Where: 16310 Middlebelt Road, Livonia. In a strip mall on Middlebelt at Terrence between Five and Six Mile roads.  
Phone: (734) 427-3717  
Open: 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Saturday.  
Menu: Beef, chicken and vegetarian pasties, vegetable beef soup, chili, lasagna, salads, potato salad and cole slaw.  
Average lunch price: \$5  
Credit cards accepted: None. Personal checks accepted

rots and rutabaga it's a legitimate pastie," he said.

Graphic Artist Tammie Graves said her vegetarian pastie was "very flavorful. I definitely would get it again. It's a meal in one." In fact, the next time Tammie ordered, she got five vegetarian pasties to take home for dinner. Her mom and sister were impressed. And the pasties were so big that even Tammie's husband, Al, couldn't eat more than one.

Managing Editor Hugh Gallagher said his tasted fine even without gravy.

Publisher Sue Rosiek could only eat half of hers because it was so big.

The only complaint I've had came from a receptionist, who said, "I know the gravy is out of a can."

Owner Barb Sell admits the gravy is from a can, but everything else is made from scratch.

"Where can you eat a home-made product for that price?" (\$3.40) she said. "And pasties are a lot of work. There's only one way to peel a carrot, a rutabaga, an onion, and that's by hand."

As for the gravy, Barb said she prefers ketchup anyway. "My grandmother would turn over in her grave if she saw gravy on a pastie."

The original Barb's Copper Country Kitchen in Royal Oak has been in operation for 16 years and sells some 400 pasties per day. The Livonia location opened almost 2½ years ago and sells 200 pasties per day.

Barb's brother Mike runs the Livonia store. He keeps chicken and beef pasties ready to go at all times. But if you want a vegetarian pastie, call on him beforehand so he can thaw one out for you.

There are other things on Barb's menu, and I wish I could



**Perfect pasties:** Barb Sell, owner of Barb's Copper Country Kitchen, removes pasties from the oven at her Livonia store.

tell you about them. But no one at my office gets anything but the pasties.

Ralph Echtenaw welcomes your comments and questions about takeout food. Call him at (734)

953-2054. Or send e-mail to [rechtenaw@ecchome.com](mailto:rechtenaw@ecchome.com) or [rechtenaw@ecchome.com](mailto:rechtenaw@ecchome.com)

# Prentice to infuse Star Southfield eateries with local flavor

BY ALICE RHEIN  
STAFF WRITER  
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A healthy economy, bad timing and poor planning were to blame for the decision earlier this month by New York-based Ark Restaurant Corp. to bail out of the Star Theatre in Southfield, closing two restaurants and abandoning two still under construction, according to a local restaurateur.

"Ark made some very big mistakes. They are very strong in New York and Las Vegas, but they don't know the Detroit market and didn't do their homework," said Matt Prentice, of Unique Restaurant Corp., who signed a deal with the Star Southfield multiplex to take over and manage the four restaurants.

Prentice's group was approached to operate the restaurants during the project's planning stages, but at the time, told the theater it had no interest.

Prentice, who owns nearly a dozen local restaurants including Morels in Bingham Farms and Northern Lakes Seafood in Bloomfield Hills, agreed to the Star's proposal after Ark failed to meet its obligations as owner and operator of Volcano Grill, Z-Dim, Fat Anthony's and Starlight Brewery.

"Through much media wooing, but very little marketing to the public, Volcano Grill opened in December, followed by Z-Dim in early January of this year."

But even early on, there were problems. Staff was difficult to attract, in part because of the low unemployment rate, and also

because few in the service industry were looking to switch jobs during the height of the holiday season.

But Prentice said it was Ark's mistaken philosophy of "what works in New York will work in Detroit" that brought the restaurants to a swift close. "Z-Dim, with its wild screens and dim sum, was very cool, but I knew this would never work. It was Detroit. A friend even said it was too weird for SoHo," he said.

Plus, people in this area don't think of the theater as a restaurant. It's a whole mindset that Prentice doesn't think was taken

into consideration. Ark did not return calls for comment placed to its New York office.

But Prentice said the restaurant group paid dearly, estimating that Ark spent \$14 million on the failed venture.

"It was a pretty big mistake," he said.

Under Prentice's management agreement, the new venture won't cost him anything but a lot of hard work. He says finding employees once all the restaurants are ready to open will be his biggest obstacle.

"I'm going to need 300 people. That's the only thing that wor-

ries me," he said.

Plans are to keep Volcano Grill's southwestern theme, though the menu will be retooled, according to Prentice. But dramatic changes are in the works for Z-Dim, he added.

"That will become Mash, a restaurant focused on mashed potatoes which are very popular with Detroiters," said Prentice.

He is also looking into ditching the bizarre screen art and showing famous comedy clips instead.

"We are going to focus on

entertainment. We will have live entertainment at Volcano Grill and comedy at Mash," he said.

And after construction is complete, the Italian restaurant, Cosmo's Pizza, Pasta & Brew will have family fun including clowns and kid-friendly food. The brew pub will offer a sports bar atmosphere.

No opening dates have been set, but Prentice hopes to have Volcano Grill up and running within a few weeks, with the rest to follow.

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