

DINING

# Mackinnon's offers fabulous fare in charming setting

BY RENEE SKOGLUND  
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After occupying the same address on East Main Street in downtown Northville for the last 20 years, you wouldn't think Mackinnon's Restaurant would need much of an introduction.

But it does, for this is a restaurant that constantly infuses the old with the new while retaining all its enduring Scottish-Victorian charm.

For instance, many fine dining restaurants serve foie gras. But at Mackinnon's, it's served with brandied apple slices and "Cinnamon Fire Sauce" made from cinnamon, apple juice, cayenne pepper and a splash of grenadine. It's both daring and delicious.



**Creative chefs:** Chefs Chuck and Ian Mackinnon display two of their creations - Foie gras with "Cinnamon Fire Sauce" and Napoleon topped with a chocolate-covered potato chip.

"I believe it's the passion we have for the food," said chef Chuck Mackinnon, cousin to owner Tom Mackinnon, about his culinary inspiration. "You have to love what you do. I love cooking the food and coming up with new ideas, trying new combinations."

Although Mackinnon's is in the process of creating a new

menu - including debuting a seafood cornucopia - it will never abandon long-time house favorites like Beef Wellington, Boudin and "Blowup" Duck. "We fill it with air and that puffs out the skin so the meat

and contemporary Victorian chic.

Walk into the warmly lit entrance area, a mini parlor with wingback chairs and antiques, and a huge buck head looming over a carved Victorian fireplace greets you. More heads - ram, buffalo, bear and caribou - line the wall in front of the bar. There's also several mounted fish, caught by Tom Mackinnon.

However, it's the 21-foot wood plank bar, which Tom Mackinnon made in his garage 21 years ago, that finally catches and keeps your attention. Simply put, this is the bar at which you want to swirl your cognac and smoke your favorite cigar.

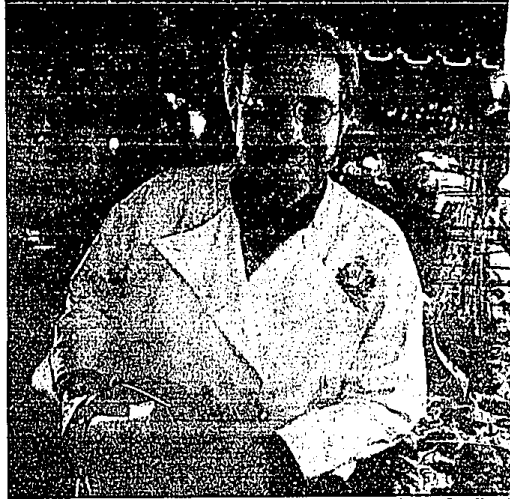
"We are cigar friendly," said Victoria Siegel, general manager. In fact, Mackinnon's sells cigars, and Wednesday nights are known as "Cheers" nights. Thanks to a van that came crashing through the front windows at 6 a.m. one Monday last November, the dining room has been completely remodeled. Recovery was quick. "We were open for dinner that day. I had five carpenters in here, and they just rocked," said Tom Mackinnon.

The new look, set off by beautiful plaid carpeting and a stained glass focal piece, is artful, warm and inviting. It calls for a bit of lingering over dessert and coffee.

and skin roast separately," said Chuck Mackinnon. He seasons the duck with just salt and pepper - why mess with perfection? - and serves it with a raspberry sauce. Some customers consider the duck the restaurant's signature dish.

Mackinnon's decor is also an inspiration, a combination of gentrified country hunting lodge

**Mackinnon's Restaurant**  
Where: 126 East Main Street, Northville, (248) 348-1991, fax (248) 348-9470  
Hours: Lunch: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday-Friday; 11:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday. Dinner: 5:10 p.m., Monday-Thursday; 5:11 p.m. Friday-Saturday.  
Atmosphere: Inviting, sophisticated, intimate  
Menu: Classical, French-inspired with regional American flair. Appetizers, soups, salads, seafood and meats. Be-still-my-heart desserts.  
Price: Expensive: Appetizers \$6.95-\$8.95; entrees \$29.95-\$35.95; desserts \$4.95-\$7.50.  
Seating: 80-plus, non-smoking except for bar area Monday-Thursday. Four tables smoking Friday and Saturday.  
Reservations: Recommended one week in advance for weekends.



STAFF PHOTO BY DATAN SUTTELL

**Best bottle:** Tom Mackinnon displays a premiere vintage from his wine cellar. Wednesday night is "Cheers" night at the Northville eatery. Customers say Mackinnon's 21-foot wood plank bar is a great place to savor cognac or smoke a fine cigar. The "Cheers" crowd are regulars at Mackinnon's.

Mackinnon's has long been known for its desserts, like Banann Wellington with Caramel Sauce or Chocolate Chocolate Creation, a chocolate cylinder filled with Cabernet milk chocolate mousse and served with fresh berries. And if you've never tried a chocolate-covered freshly made potato chip, now's the time. Pastry chef Ian Mackinnon, a nephew, plunks one down atop a glorious Napoleon stuffed with Bavarian cream and dressed with Godiva chocolate and fresh raspberries. "Chocolate-covered potato chips are awesome," he said.

Tom Mackinnon said diners at his restaurant can expect the

finest in service. His staff has been with him a long time. "They're fabulous, the world's best. I'm blest," he said.

Mackinnon's is also a full catering company that handles both small graduation parties and events of 5,000. It has provided dinners for President Clinton's Town Hall events, Governor Engler's inaugural host party and the cast of ABC's N.Y.P.D. Blue. "I love doing the catering because you can spend lots of time, and it's so arty," said Tom Mackinnon, who graduated from Schoolcraft College's Culinary Arts program and trained in Belgium and France.

He once made a 5-foot cake in

the shape of a car. "It drove itself in. All the lights worked. It was cool."

Don't expect car-shaped cakes when dining at Mackinnon's Restaurant. However, expect Snapper Turtle Soup, Sweet Potato Crusted Superior Whitefish, Rack of New Zealand Spring Lamb with black currant sauce, and White Chocolate Ice Cream on Croute with raspberry puree. Expect the best and come hungry.

"They're going to be very full. We don't skip on anything," said Chuck Mackinnon.

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