

DINING

Desserts are the icing on the cake at Parkway Grille

BY ELEANOR HEALD
SPECIAL WRITER

If you eat out regularly at metro Detroit restaurants, you know the area has more than a few very talented chefs. When they gain national recognition, it's worth crowing about.

How's this from the November 2001 *Chocolatier* magazine? "Although located inside the Marriott Hotel in Pontiac, Michigan, no one would mistake the Parkway Grille for a run-of-the-mill hotel dining room. The atmosphere is of an elegant and comfortable living room complete with fireplace and framed black-and-white photographs of the state's best-known export, automobiles. (Pastry chef) Patricia Ivory's White Chocolate Cherry Bread Pudding is the ultimate comfort food for such a setting: a rich, moist pudding made from white bread and chocolate, enlivened with local Michigan dried cherries."

Shifting gears

Ivory earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing from Oakland University and went on to earn a Nursing Masters from Indiana University. While practicing nursing for 20 years, she continued to hone the skills for her first passion—baking, running a home-baking business on the side.

Once passion ruled, Ivory left her nursing career and enrolled at Grand Rapids Community College to study Baking & Pastry Arts and Culinary Management. There, she was instructed by a French Master Pastry Chef on the faculty.

"Nursing was an intellectually stimulating profession for me," said Ivory. It gave me a strong foundation in work ethics that I've carried over to my new career, such as discipline, setting priorities, organization, and planning. Parkway Grille's Executive Chef Jerry Nottage recognized Ivory's skills.

"Patricia had recently received her pastry certification," he noted, "and we were close to opening in November 2000 when I interviewed her. I immediately saw that she had the vision to create the desserts I had in mind for the menu. Not only can she bake, but

she completes a presentation perfectly."

Developing a passion

Ivory, who lives in Troy, is the seventh of eight children who grew up on a farm in New Haven. Her mother cooked all the family meals from scratch. For Christmas, when she was seven years old, her parents gave her an Easy Bake Oven.

The next day, she baked her first cake. She also says she was inspired by Julia Child whom she watched on television. By age 12, she was taking notes as she watched Child's cooking shows.

"My parents," she explained, "wanted me to go to college to acquire skills for a profession. Back then, I didn't know that being a chef was a profession. Besides Julia Child, I didn't know any other woman who was a chef."

Today, Ivory owns more than 350 baking and cooking books. In addition to *Chocolatier* magazine, she regularly reads *Food Arts*, *Pastry Art and Design*, and *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture*.

Vibrant desserts

Believing that flavor is first in any dessert, for the Michigan Cherry and Tart Apple Cobbler on Parkway Grille's dessert menu, she first sautes apples, sugar, and vanilla bean seeds in butter to create light caramel flavors. Baked in a ramekin, the crust topping remains crumbly.

Even though it's all chocolate,

Ivory likes the French classic LeMarigny Torte for its different textures and tastes. Two different chocolate cake layers are held together with chocolate saffron mousse.

You can find the original recipe for White Chocolate Cherry Bread Pudding in the November 2001 issue of *Chocolatier*.

Specialty desserts

Beginning near the end of November, Parkway Grille will offer dessert specials created by Pastry Chef Patricia Ivory. Although each will not be offered daily, they will include Pumpkin and Milk Chocolate Mousse Cake with Apple Cider Sauce and Scharffen Berger Dark Chocolate Molten Lava Cake, served warm with Espresso Ice Cream. Scharffen Berger chocolate, created by California's John Scharffenberger, is considered world-class by renowned pastry chefs around the globe.

To be served in a Martini glass and garnished with candied cranberries and orange peel, Vanilla Risotto with Sweet Ginger Spice Crackers takes rice pudding to new heights for the holidays. Additionally, individual-size Pineapple Upside Down Cake is enhanced by a rum-raisin caramel sauce.

Eleanor Heald is a Troy resident who writes about dining, food, wine and spirits for the *Observer & Eccentric Newspapers*. Leave her a message at (734) 953-2047.

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