

# Pike Street in Pontiac reopens with new vitality

BY ELEANOR HEALD  
CORRESPONDENT

Regulars are coming back. "And when they do," added Pike Street restaurant's general manager Brian Macnamara, "they say WOW, you really did change this place. They love the new decor, the new menu and the music."

Indeed, the new owner of Pontiac's destination fine dining restaurant, 30-year-old Nash Zaitouna, improved the look of the building's exterior, all except the sign, but that's coming. The main dining room, inspired by designer John Janvriya of West Bloomfield, is now filled with comfortable, intimate booths, along with the always-popular U-shaped banquettes in the corners.

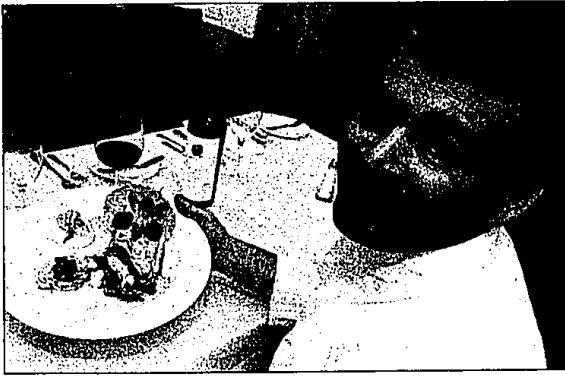
Richly-colored, imported Italian sofa chairs offer seating in the bright Terrace Room, where more wall art is planned.

The Tavern Room, sporting a new ceiling mural by Jeff Von Buskirk of Novi, retains the elegant bar, the only vestige from the former Pike Street structure except the brick walls. Greg Nichols' grand piano is still there and he's back playing every Thursday, Friday and Saturday evening. His rendition of "Rhapsody in Blue" is legendary. In addition to Macnamara, Nichols is the only other former employee from Pike Street's past. Vocalist Barbara Coleman is a new performer on Saturdays.

This is the first restaurant venture for Zaitouna, who also owns Churchill's cigar shop in Birmingham. "Pontiac is growing," he said. "I didn't change the name because Pike Street had an excellent reputation. It was well-known for excellent food and we plan to further that standing."

## CHEF SETS THE TONE

Over the years, Pike Street garnered its reputation from its chefs. Brian Polyan, now chef/owner of Five Lakes Grill in Milford, was among the first.



Pike Street Restaurant Executive Chef Mikey J. Bates with "The Caesar" Salad.

Derrin Moore went from Pike Street to the Golden Mushroom and on to a posh country club in South Carolina. Randy Emer followed a similar path from the Pike Street kitchen to Paint Creek Cider Mill & Restaurant to the Golden Mushroom and is now executive chef at Great Oaks Country Club in Rochester.

New head to the Pike Street is 38-year-old Michigan native and Birmingham resident Mikey Bates, who partnered in Chef Mikey Inc., a catering operation in Naples, Fla., during the winter months and at The Lodge in Saratoga, N.Y., in summer. Family circumstances brought Bates back to Michigan and several serendipitous circumstances connected him with Zaitouna and Macnamara.

"I'm Greek and Italian by heritage," chef Mikey said. "So you could say that I was raised on flavors." Or you might suspect it's in his genes since five cousins in his generation are chefs.

"I honed my French classical cooking methods in the kitchen at the Ritz-Carlton in Naples, Fla.," chef Mikey added. "These skills allowed me to refine the flavors that were somewhat instinctual from my upbringing."

## REFINED FOOD INSTINCTS

Only a few of the principal plates from the dinner menu are offered at lunch. At midday, however, the Sandwich Board is eclectic with each item accompanied by house cut fries or homemade kettle chips, pickle and sweet and sour cole slaw. Tasty stuff at \$8-9.

All stops are pulled at dinner. A cold appetizer simply called "Shrimp Cocktail" is out of the ordinary. Chilled colossal gulf shrimp are accompanied by classic cocktail sauce, cognac aioli and freshly-grated horseradish "painted" on the rim of the plate in the form of a braid. All attractively-presented cold appetizers and salads are further comple-

mented by buffalo mozzarella and basil. Chef Mikey's concept expands to twin petals of both red and yellow tomatoes, baby frisee, basil chiffonade and a balsamic reduction.

An entree basically named "The Lamb" has its story told on the plate where roasted-to-order rack of Colorado lamb with a Montrechet and pine nut crust is accompanied by mint custard, roasted shallot, Fino Sherry lamb jus and lemon coulis. It, like all meat and poultry dishes, is served with potato du jour and appropriate vegetable garnish.

A sole Aslan kiss on an otherwise Mediterranean-inspired menu is "The Ahi Tuna." Chef Mikey said it satisfies his love of travel. Will he go to other parts in months to come? "Nash (Zaitouna) will most certainly have me include inspirations from the Middle East in the near future," chef Mikey said.

## MORE TO COME

While nearly completed, Pike Street is still evolving. Imported pieces of wall art will be strategically placed as they arrive. All waitstaff are new and eager to please. Their service skills improve daily under the tutelage of Macnamara.

At purchase, Zaitouna and Macnamara inherited a wine inventory. The wine list will become more creative as Macnamara seeks out more Italian, Spanish and French wines from the Rhone Valley and adds them to the list.

Early next year, the second floor banquet facilities will be upgraded.

For now, Pike Street is back. Chef Mikey said his "food was all about love." Yet, that's the spirit that pervades throughout all of the new Pike Street.

## PIKE STREET

Where: 18 W. Pike St., Pontiac, (248) 334-7878.

Open: Lunch 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday-Friday; dinner 5:30-10 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday; until 11 p.m. Friday and Saturday.

Food style: Impressive harmony of colors and flavors in Mediterranean-influenced dishes.

Cost: Lunch average \$10. Dinner main courses \$20-\$32.

mented by an edible orchid. Soup du Jour is handcrafted to order using premium, fresh ingredients. The Caprese salad is a lot more than tomatoes,

## City Bites

If savory, slow-cooked barbecue tantalizes your taste buds, check out the newly-opened MotorCity Pit Stop at MotorCity Casino, 2901 Grand River, Detroit.

After traveling to several states in search of barbecue perfection, Certified Master Chef Michael Russell and his culinary team indicated that they have created a restaurant that provides the optimum barbecue experience.

Chef Michael said the secret of barbecuing is slow cooking for four to 12 hours, a more patience-testing process than grilling. In creating an enjoyable barbecue meal, he acknowledged that marinades and rubs are as important as wood-fired barbecue pits with Tennessee hickory logs, like the ones at The Pit Stop.

Complementing meat items in the dine-in-only restaurant are barbecued baked beans, braised country greens, freshly mashed potatoes, macaroni and cheese, creamy coleslaw and old-fashioned potato salad. Fresh from the bakery there's cornbread or cheddar cheese/jalapeno pepper bread. Desserts include deep-dish pecan pie, warm apple cobbler and double rich chocolate cake.

-Eleanor Heald

The Pit Stop is open daily from 11 a.m. to 1 a.m.

Care Choices HMO = A+

Spelling = A

Math = B+



# Health care... that makes the grade

## Not all health care plans are alike.

Care Choices HMO is committed to providing members with access to top-quality health care and service. Our drive for quality is clearly demonstrated by the high marks we earned in the latest national ratings of health care plans.

## #1 in Southeast Michigan.

At Care Choices, we know that member satisfaction is the highest measure of quality. According to the latest national consumer satisfaction survey, Care Choices HMO members rated their experience of care ahead of all southeast Michigan health plans in 9 out of 10 measures\*\*\*. It's no surprise, then, that Care Choice is among the top 10% of health plans in the nation, and #1 in the state, when it comes to how quickly members get care\*.

## Rated "Excellent" by NCQA.

Accreditation by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) is an important measure of quality. Care Choices HMO received NCQA's highest rating of "Excellent."

### How NCQA rates Care Choices HMO

Area of Focus	NCQA Rating
Overall health plan performance	"Excellent"
Getting better	★★★★ out of 4
Living with illness	★★★★ out of 4
Qualified providers	★★★★ out of 4
Staying healthy	★★★ out of 4
Access & service	★★★★ out of 4



## Top 10% in the nation.

Care Choices ranks among the top 10% of health plans in the nation on six key measures of clinical quality. In fact, Care Choices was recognized as "Best in Class" on four of these measures. This designation means that Care Choices performance represents a benchmark for other health plans.

### Key Measures of Clinical Quality

Key Measures of Clinical Quality	Care Choices Performance*
<b>Women's Health</b>	
Breast cancer screening	Top 10% of health plans nationally
Cervical cancer screening	#5 in the nation, "Best in Class"
Menopausal management	#5 in the nation
<b>Chronic Illness Care</b>	
Asthma care	Top 10% of health plans nationally
Diabetes care	
• Lipid control	#6 in the nation, "Best in Class"
• Poor HbA1c control	#10 in the nation, "Best in Class"
Cholesterol management after a heart attack	Top 10% of health plans nationally
<b>Mental Health</b>	
Follow-up after hospitalization for mental illness	Top 10% of health plans nationally, "Best in Class"
Management of antidepressant medication during acute treatment	Top 10% of health plans nationally
<b>Preventive Health</b>	
Advising smokers to quit	#5 in the nation**

When you study your options, there's only one smart choice.

# Care Choices

A MEMBER OF TRINITY HEALTH

\*The source for data contained in this publication is Quality Connect® 2002 and is used with the permission of the National Committee for Quality Assurance. \*\*Quality Assurance Improvement for members based on three data sources: the survey, the survey, and the survey. Quality Connect is a registered trademark of NCQA. \*\*\*Quality Connect 2002 data. For measures not reported by survey in 2002.

\*\*Based on the survey of all 10 member health plans included in Quality.