

Small Plates makes a big hit with customers

BY MARY QUINLEY
CORRESPONDENT

Snaug inside the circa 1920 Eureka Building, just across the street from the Detroit Opera House, sits one of the theater/stadium district's newest dining delights, Small Plates-Detroit.

The eatery, sporting an upscale yet comfy ambience, opened in November 2002.

"I really liked Small Plates," said Cindy Lupo of Canton, who, with her boyfriend, Dan Latarski, recently enjoyed an early dinner at the restaurant. Lupo and Latarski are students at Schoolcraft College in Livonia. Lupo ordered the Oven Roasted Turkey Baguette. The sandwich, topped with Swiss cheese and spicy mustard, is served with a side of house-made fries.

Latarski of Livonia especially liked the yummy dessert that the twosome shared.

"It was really good," he said, referring to the Chocolate Chunk Cookie Sandwich with Sanders Hot Fudge filled with a dollop of Guernsey's Butter Pecan Ice Cream.

In the mid-1980s, while working in a restaurant in Spain, Todd Stern, who is co-owner of Small Plates with Todd Stowell, noted that the tables had stacks of small white plates that customers used for their tapas. This unique dining concept intrigued Stern.

"Tapas is a Spanish appetizer representing a small or little portion of food," Stern explained.

At Small Plates customers choose from a dozen or more "small yet filling" entrees including Garlic Shrimp, a popular tapa served in Spain.

American appetizers and Pan Asian dishes, like spring rolls and a spicy stir-fry wrapped in romaine hearts, add an appealing twist to the menu.

What dishes do customers rave about?

"One favorite is the Chicken Skewers with Asian rice noodles," Stern said. Patrons love the presentation. The skewers of chicken are arranged on a small white plate in a teepee style formation and held together at the top by skewers of cucumbers.

Other favorites include the Veggie Spring Roll accompanied by a trio of dipping sauces, and, for beef lovers like Bill Chaplin, the Petite Tenderloin topped with Gorgonzola and crispy onions.



The newest addition to Small Plates is bartender Kramer.

"I think it's a great combination," said Chapin of Grosse Pointe. The Petite Tenderloin is filling, he said, and a great bargain at \$10.

Small Plates is "more than a restaurant," Chapin said. "It's a symbol that Detroit doesn't have to be void of restaurants, and, a variety of good restaurants can exist. The owners are real trendsetters."

Pizzas are baked in a brick oven in full view of guests. Almost every table orders at least one of the brick oven pizzas, said Stern. The Quattro Fromage, sans tomato sauce, features a four-cheese blend, roasted garlic and olive oil. Other pizza choices include BBQ Chicken, Pepperoni, Garlic Shrimp and Veggie.

The Maurice is the eatery's tribute to the former J.L. Hudson Department store's lettuce salad topped with chicken, turkey and Swiss cheese. A veggie Maurice is also available.

Everything, except the bread, is made in-house in the restaurant,

including the pizza dough, barbecue sauce and the pastries.

Show-and-tell meetings are held daily with our "wonderful" staff to discuss the specials of the day, talk about new wines and/or menu changes, and, sample the food, said Stern.

Executive chef, Jeff Baker, "brings exceptional experience with the ordering for the daily food and supplies," Stern said. And, Aaron True, sous chef, a graduate of the Schoolcraft College culinary program, brings "a lot of creativity to the menu."

Any future plans for the restaurant? Yes, Stern said.

In mid-summer, the establishment plans to open a lower level, expand the seating capacity and offer live jazz sessions.

Also, said Stern, we continue to explore our options to open a Small Plates in the suburbs.

Mary Quinley is a Livonia resident and writes about food and travel for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

SMALL PLATES-DETROIT

Where: 1521 Broadway, Detroit, (313) 963-0497

Open: 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday, 11 a.m. to midnight Friday, noon to midnight Saturday, noon to 8 p.m. Sunday

Menu: A variety of "small" entrees including Garlic Shrimp, Barbecue Ribs, Portabella Mushrooms and Petite Tenderloin \$6-\$10. Gourmet sandwiches, \$7-\$9, brick oven pizzas \$8-\$10, salads \$5-\$8. Kid's menu available.

Credit cards: All major credit cards are accepted. Reservations: Recommended for parties of six or more.

Enjoy an evening of food and wine to help the hungry

BY ELEANOR HEALD
CORRESPONDENT

Share Our Strength, Taste of the Nation, the largest national benefit, in which the culinary community and wine purveyors annually fight hunger and poverty with taste, will be held 7-10 p.m. Sunday, April 27 at Somerset Collection South in Troy.

Tickets are \$100 per person. Contact Kristen Hickey at Unique Restaurant Corporation (248) 646-0370, Ext. 216.

Guests will enjoy an incredible array of foods from area restaurants such as Forte and Streetside in Birmingham; Shiraz, No. 77, Northern Lakes, Morels, Portabella and Duet in the Unique Restaurant Group; Asian-inspired Mon Jin Lau, Cafe Sushi, and Musashi; Capital Grill, Ruth's Chris and McCormick & Schmick in Troy, along with a host of other popular dining out spots.

To complement the dishes prepared for the event by the area's premier chefs, area wine purveyors will be pouring a dazzling assortment including classic wines of the Veneto, delicious 2001 estate-bottled German rieslings, a decadent dozen from the Australian Premium Wine Collection, Sterling Vineyards and Beaulieu Vineyards wines from Napa Valley, limited production chardonnays and pinot noirs from Oregon and the highly-touted Spanish wines of Jorge Ordonez.

Benefactors of the event are the Food Bank of Oakland County, Gleaners Community Food Bank, Food Gatherers, Detroit Entrepreneurship Institute and Hunger Action Coalition.

Eleanor Heald is a nationally published writer and Troy resident who writes about restaurants, food, wine and spirits for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. To leave her a voice mail message, dial (734) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, mailbox 18644.

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