Getting Around

By ETHEL SIMMONS

Where food's best in Detroit, Toronto

Mary Conway and Harry Satchwell both collected menus and enjoyed eating, traveling and writing. It was a natural that these two would get together to produce a palatable restaurant guide on Greater Detroit, now in its fourth, big 1979 edition. "Meet, Eat & Enjoy Greater Detroit" is a fat, 252-page large paperback.

And while Mary Conway looks slim and trim, her research partner, Harry Satchwell, has the expanding waistline of a true gourmand.

When they go out to eat, which they do about 500 times a year, she happpily settles for a calorie-careful fish dish, and he orders "the lobster, or a very elaborate veal dish,'" according to Satchwell.

"We try something that will test the restaurant," he said, further explaining their choices.

In addition to the Detroit restaurant guide, the writing team has come out with a 32-page mini-vacation guide 'The Very Best of Metropolitan Toronto." This magazine-size publication includes menus and recommendations for the 20 very best places to eat in Toronto.

"ABOUT TWO YEARS ago we started to get letters asking that we do a restaurant guide for Toronto," Satchwell said. "We conducted a survey of our readers. Eighty per cent of them wanted this type of thing."

Satchwell noted that one-half million people from the Greater Detroit area go to Toronto every year.

Ms. Conway said she and Satchwell "split the writing down the middle, our styles are so similar," working on both the Detroit and Toronto books.

They are the publishers and spend April through September on production. The fourth revision of "Meet, Eat & Enjoy Greater Detroit" was completed in August 1975. A few restaurants have gone under, changed hands or opened since the guide was prepared, but the book is still chockful of facts on most of your favorite places and tons of ones you'll want to try.

Menus highlight the Conway-Satchwell restaurant guides. These menus appear deceptively simple, although actually involving a great deal of effort to put together.

EVERY MENU is redesigned for our purposes," Satchwell said. Most menus run three or four pages and have to be condensed to one page for the restaurant guide, yet still remain comprehensive.

Besides doing menus for their Detroit book, Ms. Conway and Satchwell helped Les Gruber redesign the London Chop House menu. The top-rated seafood restaurant, Joe Muer's, regularly has a one-page menu, "which is rare," Satchwell said.

You won't find every well-known restaurant in "Meet, Eat & Enjoy Greater Detroit." Popular spots have been dropped from the guide when their quality slips.

Some of the menus in the guide have been recreated by the two writers. Alban's Bottle and Basket in Birmingham doesn't have a menu, Satchwell pointed out. And the Soup Kitchen in Detroit posts its menu on a chalkboard.

Along with menus, facts about hours, credit cards accepted, and personal tidbits, the Detroit guide includes a section in back with tempting wrap-ups of places that offer offbeat dining experiences:

Al fresco, such as at sidewalk cafes; the Detroit Institute of Arts sumptuous Wassail Feast; and the Stately Dinners at Meadow Brook Hall, to name a few.

THERE'S A COMPILATION of places for dancing and entertainment, to dine near lakes and rivers, markets and special neighborhoods, parks and picnics, and for special times.

On page 221 is a guide prepared by a guest writer, on where to go for St. Patrick's Day fun. A few Celebrity Recipes — less than in the past — and maps of the metro area — at readers' request — are all included.

If you're looking for a particular kind of food, ethnic or "the best American," you'll find it in the Detroit guide. Menu pages cover 160 restaurants, ranging from Ah Wok (Chinese) to Zosia's (Polish), but there's also a front section detailing restaurants by type (Arabic, Jewish Deli, Latino), with tips on how to plan and enjoy these kinds of dining experiences.

The best restaurant in Toronto, according to the Toronto guide, is the elegant French restaurant Napoleon. The guide also lists the Kensington Market, where you can pick up a snack, for 39 cents, while you shop.

"Toronto has an ill-deserved reputation as an expensive town," Satchwell said. He pointed out that if you stick to house wines, instead of high-priced French wines, you can keep your dinner tab down.

"THE BEST restaurant in Toronto is considerably better than Detroit, but outside of that, Detroit is better," he said. "We put Detroit ahead of any other city because of the ethnic restaurants."

Satchwell said "Meet, Eat & Enjoy Greater Detroit" represents the better places around town and where he and Mary Conway think people will be most comfortable.

Some restaurants offer good food but spotty service and an intimidating manner, he said; that's a good way not to make points with these discriminating authors.

Dinner theatre offers 'Dial 'M' for Murder'

"Dial 'M' for Murder," a suspense drama by Fredrick Knott, is being presented Friday and Saturday evenings through May 26 at Somerset Dinner Theater in Somerset Mall, Troy.

The show is directed by Kathryn L. Sutton for Jimmy Launce Productions, Inc. "Dial 'M' for Murder" played for several seasons in London and New York prior to its Detroit premiere at Somerset Dinner Theater.

The play, set in England, is the story of a tennis pro's plot to murder his wife. Through ironic twists of fate, that is not what happens.

The evening begins with a buffet prepared by Alfred's Restaurant. It includes salad bar, relishes, three entrees, vegetables, dessert and beverage. The ticket price includes dinner, show, tax and gratuities. Dinner is at 7:30 p.m. followed by the show at 8:45 p.m. Reservations can be made by calling 643-8865.

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