

Not so slick but still funny

a counting for taste

D. Gustibus

Roman Tavern has tasty dishes

Your traveling taster visits area eateries and rates them on a 100-point scale. Up to 30 points are awarded for ambience, which includes general atmosphere and service; 55 points for food, and 15 points for price.

Blue rating. A total count of 59 points or less indicates a restaurant is not recommended, 60-74 points signify from passing to good, 75-80 points designate very good with some extraordinary features, and 90-100 points show that a very special dining experience awaits you.

THE ROMAN TAVERN, 50 W. Tienken, Rochester (652-9002), provides a relaxed setting in which to enjoy a pleasant Italian meal. The restaurant, with its subdued lighting, is decorated to give a tavern-like feeling. The decor is very sparse, but the overall effect is one of warmth. There are booths and tables with clean tablecloths, and most of the diners are casually dressed. Our table was ready when we arrived, and dinner took an hour and 40 minutes. General Atmosphere Award — 15 points maximum. Points awarded — 11.

We have been disappointed so often by service that it was a special treat to find a young, very helpful staff that included high-quality waitressing and outstanding bussing. We received prompt, caring service, including extra soup plates, knives and many other attentions. Our only criticism was that occasionally the businessmen were a little too fast, clearing some plates before one even finished. It was very nice to find an ample number of well-trained people who did their best to provide good, efficient and pleasing service. Service — 15 points maximum. Points awarded — 14.

The bread was unusually fresh and was served with butter that was lightly flavored with garlic. This extra touch seems simple, but few restaurants do it this well. The meal includes soup and salad. The minestrone, served from a large crock, was hearty and filled with vegetables, but it seemed to contain too many beans. The tortellini soup, with meat-filled pasta in a chicken broth, was very good. The pasta was especially tasty, although the broth was a bit salty. The salad, while very fresh, was unspiced and consisted primarily of lettuce with a few slices of cucumber and some cabbage and carrot shavings. The house vinegar-and-oil dressing was adequate. Drinks were strong. Before the Entree — 15 points maximum. Points awarded — 12.

table talk

Wine authority

Madeline Trifon, sommelier at the London Chop House in Detroit, has become the first American woman to earn the Master Sommelier diploma. She was one of 18 candidates from 10 states who participated in the first U.S.-based advanced certificate course and master sommelier exam recently.

Trifon was one of five candidates who qualified for the exam. She was the only one of the five to earn the diploma. Each of the remaining four candidates will be offered another chance at the diploma this October in London.

Trifon began her wine career with Westin Hotels in Detroit, working as sommelier at the Detroit Westin's La Fontaine restaurant from 1978 until 1985 when she joined the London Chop House.

Salad scene

A dozen salads are available at the Salad Scene, one of the Restaurants on Mainstreet at Tel-Twelve Mall in Southfield. The salads, all prepared fresh daily, include homemade pasta, greek, greek, julienne, plish, taco, fresh fruit, tuna, chicken, seafood, antipasto and small dinner. The dressings are homemade ranch, Italian, blue cheese, French, thousand island, special Greek and sweet poppyseed.

prepared "al dente," and the dish had a full, rich flavor. The portion was quite large, with lots of seafood. The ravioli marisara (\$13.95) was another special, and it contained shrimp, lobster and scallops with homemade spinach pasta and a white seafood sauce. On first taste, this combination — with its hearty seafood flavor and excellent pasta — seemed the best of the entrees. However, the dish proved a bit heavy and somewhat too salty by the end. Entree, Vegetable and Garnishes — 30 points maximum. Points awarded — 28.

"A" for effort, but only "B" for execution in the dessert category. The cannoli (\$2.95) was quite unusual in that it was chocolate filled. Unfortunately, the shell was rather soggy, which detracted from a rather good flavor. The Kablusa Bavarian cream cake, with cookie crust, looked superb. It was very light, but the taste was too delicate. A bit more flavor would have made this much better. Dessert — 10 points maximum. Points awarded — 7.

The meal, with tip, was about \$50 per couple. While this is a little more expensive than the average casual Italian restaurant, the meal was not overpriced. There was ample food and excellent service so that this seemed to be a good value. Price/Value — 15 points maximum. Points awarded — 13.

A COUNTING FOR TASTE — 100 points maximum. Total points awarded: 83. The Roman Tavern would have a try in Rochester. You'll feel welcomed and enjoy attentive service and a good meal.

D. Gustibus welcomes your reactions, comments and suggestions of favorite restaurants in the Observer & Eccentric area. Write to D. Gustibus, in care of the Observer & Eccentric, Entertainment Department, P.O. Box 3503, Birmingham 48012.

In the last few months, moviegoers have been treated to two appealing previews of Tri-Star's coming attraction, "Blind Date," (PG-13) featuring Kim Basinger and Bruce Willis of television's "Moonlighting." Strangely enough, the motion picture omits the footage so widely previewed.

The attraction has arrived and, after lots of laughter, I've got some second thoughts about Blake Edwards and his sense of comedy.

In a comic framework "Blind Date" summons up all the fear and trembling that people experience when confronted with a new and unknown social situation. Embarrassment is the prime reaction that disturbs both partners on a blind date.

"Will I look foolish with this person?" "Will I be above or below myself appearing in public with this person?" "Will I embarrass myself?" "Will my blind date embarrass me?"

That last question is particularly important in this "Blind Date" because Walter Davis (Willis) desperately needs a date for an extremely important business dinner.

Walter is a hard-working portfolio analyst for a major investment firm whose chairman, Harry Gruen (George Coe), has just landed a major account with a Japanese industrialist, Mr. Yakamoto (Sab Saitono), for whom his all-important dinner is being held.

WALTER IS unsuccessful in finding a last-minute date. That's quite to be expected since he spends most of his nights working on financial analyses. His friendly rival and co-worker, Denny Gordon (Mark Blum), has no such problem. He's quite the operator with women and dresses a good deal better than Walter. Mr. Gruen seems to prefer Danny, even though his work isn't up to snuff.

This is but one problem in Edwards' comic structure in "Blind Date." At a number of junctures, the events are far too predictable, lack apparent motivation, are incompletely worked out and just don't have the subtle and sophisticated humor that we've come to expect from Edwards — and from any accomplished director.

In this particular scene the well-dressed Gordon gives Mr. Gruen a casual excuse for not being prepared for a major staff meeting concerning the new Japanese client. On the other hand, carefully costumed, workaholic Walter is berated for his clothes after making his presentation.

Now, it might have been humorous

if Walter had blown his presentation because he was tired from working all night. But we're never sure if he fumbles the ball or makes the shot, as the sequence just dribbles softly into the next scene. Somehow Gordon should get his come-appearance. But the comic potential is destroyed. Mr. Gruen looks foolish and the situation is unfinished.

WALTER FINALLY IS forced to rely on his brother, Ted (Phil Hartman), for a blind date. Ted is a slick, but stereotyped, used-car salesman who even overcharges his own brother. Unfortunately, Ted's characterization is simple-minded and lacks the depth and sophistication needed to raise the film above its well-done, but mundane, slapstick.

Ted's wife, Susie (Stephanie Faracy), has a friend, Nadia Gates (Kim Basinger), who has just returned to town and needs a date. Despite distracting his brother, Walter agrees, and picks up the lovely Nadia who, he is warned, should not be allowed to consume alcohol.

Overwhelmed by her beauty, Walter ignores that warning and, for no apparent reason, in a major example of missing motivation, takes Nadia to a recording studio where he used to play financial analyst. They drink champagne while listening to noted guitar stylist Stanley Jordan's (himself) recording session. They should have been rushing off to the company dinner.

The champagne sets mayhem in motion. Lacking inhibitions when her alcohol allergy is operative, Nadia insults everyone at the dinner, which, of course, leads to Walter losing his job.

The Japanese industrialist is portrayed as unpleasant and ill-mannered. Since no humor flows from such a characterization, there is no point. Anyone familiar with the Orient will readily recognize the inconsistency.

ONE MORE MAJOR example of faulted structure, and then I'll let you go see for yourself because there is enough engaging slapstick to make it worthwhile.

Nadia's ex-boy friend, David Bedford (John Larroquette), is a psychopathic attorney with nutty parents, Judge and Mrs. Harold Bedford (William Daniels and Alice Hirson). His maniacal destructiveness turns mildly neurotic from time to time. It's OK for him to have a mild face for his parents but it doesn't work when the character we see shifts so dramatically.

the movies
Dan Greenberg



Bruce Willis is Walter Davis, who has a disastrous evening with beautiful Nadia Gates, played by Kim Basinger, in Blake Edwards' comedy "Blind Date."

In spite of all these complaints, sequences, so a "Blind Date" won't there are some pretty funny but a totally embarrassing evening.

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