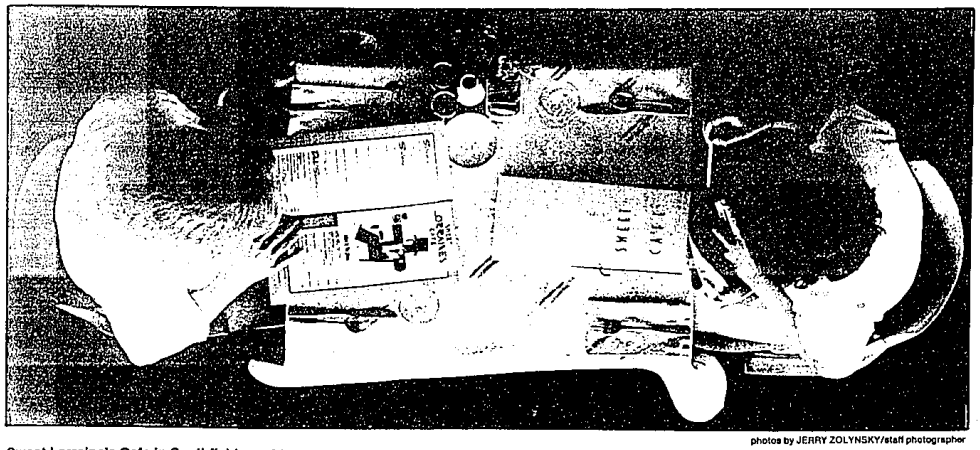


photos by JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

Sweet Lorraine's Cafe in Southfield provides interesting dishes in a lively setting.

a counting for taste
D. Gustibus

Cafe leaves a sweet taste

Waitress Robin Phelan serves Southfield residents Renee Cornacchini (left) and Donna Campbell in Sweet Lorraine's cafe setting.

Your traveling taster visits area eateries and rates them on a 100-point scale. Up to 30 points are awarded for ambiance, which includes general atmosphere and service; 55 points for food; and 15 points for price/value rating. A total count of 59 points or less indicates a restaurant is not recommended; 60-74 points signify from passing to good; 75-89 points designate very good with some extraordinary features; and 90-100 points show that a very special dining experience awaits you.

SWEET LORRAINE'S CAFE, 29101 Greenfield, Southfield (559-5985, does indeed have a cafelike atmosphere, with casually dressed and trendy couples enjoying their food and drink in this popular spot. Numerous prints are displayed on the pale peach walls, and fresh flowers give the attractive vinyl tablecloths an extra lift.

The general impression is upbeat and current. Tables are fairly close together, but good ventilation and comfortable noise levels keep the sense of crowding away.

The staff is young and energetic, and the only potential inconvenience is that reservations are accepted only for parties of five or more so that smaller groups may have to wait for a table. We did have five people, and our reservation was honored promptly and courteously. Dinner took an hour and a half. GENERAL ATMOSPHERE — 15 points maximum. Points awarded — 13.

Our service fell short in several respects. Although the waitress was extremely pleasant and responsive, she seemed to rush our service so that new courses arrived before we had completely finished what we were eating. Since this is a busy restaurant, we felt that there was a push to turn the table over as quickly as possible.

Additionally, while the busman did refill our water regularly and did replace dirty silverware, he failed to clear one appetizer until we asked as dessert was being served. There is ample help on hand, but it is not always helpful. In spite of all of this, however, we did feel "cared about" because of the warm friendliness of our waitress, and that made up for some of the other problems. SERVICE — 15 points maximum. Points awarded — 11.

The noodles Bangkok ($3.45) topped the list of the appetizers we tried. Its spicy, full flavor tantalized our taste buds and the peanut taste in the sauce complemented the noodles perfectly. However, the homemade pate' ($3.95), liver with apple and walnuts, sounded more appealing than it tasted; although beautifully presented on a plate filled with fresh fruit, the sweet apple taste overwhelmed the liver. The avocado tempura ($2.95) also missed the mark because it was rather soggy and too bland. Again, the idea was more imaginative than the result.

Three different and delicious breads were served with the meal. The house salads were generous and showed creativity by having a variety of vegetables. Fresh mushrooms, cucumbers, carrots and other items — served in chilled plates — gave a special touch, and the dressings were well flavored and served on the side. Drinks were full strength. BEFORE THE ENTREE — 15 points maximum. Points awarded — 11.

"Absolutely delicious" describes the spring pasta ($10.95), a special of the day. It was rich and creamy, with a mild but flavorful salmon sauce — a real treat. The Indonesian chicken satay ($7.95) seemed to lack character, and the rice accompanying it was dry. This flavorless entree, served with "gloppy" sauce, was a letdown after the earlier Oriental dish of noodles Bangkok. The lobster, shrimp and chicken paella ($11.95) had too much tomato taste and could have been improved by using the more traditional approach to the dish.

The blackened delmonico steak ($12.95), another daily special, surprised us very favorably. It was served rare, as ordered, and the rich spicy flavor did "Cajun cookin'" proud. Finally, we very much enjoyed the whitefish ($7.95) which tasted quite fresh and delicate. ENTREE, VEGETABLES AND GARNISHES — 30 points maximum. Points awarded — 26.

The appearance of the desserts on the tray was disappointing; unfortunately, it was an accurate representation. The carrot cake ($2.35) was dry and a little stale. The strawberrry flan ($3.25) was much too crusty and had too little filling.

But there was one redeeming dish. Our waitress did not mention it, and it was not on the tray; but we had noticed a poached pear at the bakery counter when we entered. It was stuffed with blue cheese and covered with custard. What a winner! The blend of tastes appealed to everyone at the table; it was fresh, interesting and delicious. Why it is hidden is a mystery. DESSERT — 10 points maximum. Points awarded — 7.

The cost of the meal was under $50 per couple, including tip. The menu selections are varied and peppy but do not always rise to their potential. The specials, however, were extra special. All in all, in spite of the concerns expresssed above, including feeling somewhat rushed, we enjoyed our evening. PRICE/VALUE — 15 points maximum. Points awarded — 13.

A COUNTING FOR TASTE — 100 points maximum. Total points awarded: 81. Sweet Lorraine's Cafe provides a lively setting and interesting dishes. Give it a try if you're looking for a fun change.

D. Gustibus welcomes your reactions, comments and suggestions of favorite restaurents in the Observer & Eccentric communities. Write to D. Gustibus, in care of Observer & Eccentric, Street Scene, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150.

Teetotaling draws suspicion

business etiquette
Joan K. Dietch

Dear Joan:

I have recently stopped drinking alcohol because I cannot handle it. At company parties I find it awkward to refuse a drink. One officer in our company particularly notices my not drinking and seems determined to make me admit I'm alcoholic.

I know the public is being educated on the disease concept of alcoholism more and more, but I don't want to admit to my co-workers and fellow officers in the company that I'm alcoholic.

How can I simply refuse the drinks without calling attention to myself?

R.D., Bloomfield Hills

When drinks are offered or the order taken and you choose the non-alcoholic beverage, that of course is no one's business but your own. But in the business game, competitors for company promotions are going to be looking for chinks in your armor.

Alcoholism, unfortunately even for the recovering alcoholic, carries a stigma that could indeed prove damaging to a career. When the occasion arises for you to order the non-alcoholic beverage and your choice is questioned, say "I'm into health these days, and dropping alcohol from my diet has improved my overall feeling of well-being."

If pressured, say, "You need to read up on the statistics of damage done by alcohol, whether consumed in small or large quantities." Most people lose interest in anything associated with statistics so I doubt if your nosy co-worker will pursue the subject.

Stick to your resolve to drop alcohol from your diet, and simply say to those who are rude enough to ask why that you have chosen what makes you feel best.

Dear Joan:

I have been in the management trainee program for a large retail program since I graduated from college one year ago. I am now assigned my first management position but with no mention of a raise to go with it. How can I tactfully approach this subject with my supervisor?

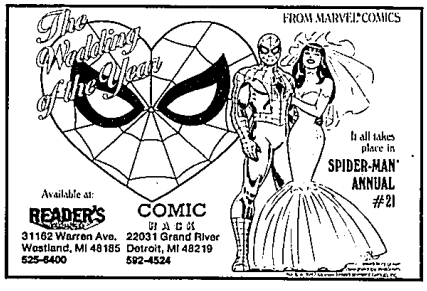
A.L., Royal Oak

To ask for a raise or not to ask for a raise: that is the question and always has been. How do we know when the time is right. . . when the raiser is feeling in a positive mood toward the raisee?

After a year on the job even as a trainee you have had the opportunity to see your supervisor in a number of moods. And supervisors are subject to moods as we all know. The perceptive employee of any company and the employee who will go far with that company knows how to use those moods to their advantage.

Are sales up in your department? Have you come up with one or two innovative ideas in your area of responsibility? When you sense your supervisor is in a non-pressured, receptive mood then set up an appointment with her/him to "talk over some things you would like her/his advice on."

Approach the raise subject as though you are seeking their advice on when to expect a raise and what do they think you need to do to receive one. Be prepared to mention the extra efforts you made while in training (the streamlining of a certain method, a new display idea, etc.) not with a "you owe me" attitude but "this is what I'm here for and glad to have the opportunity" attitude.



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