

TASTE

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MONDAY, MARCH 29, 1993

TASTE BUDS



CHEF LARRY JANES

'Do lunch' in style without busting budget

How many times have you heard the old expression — "Let's do lunch" — only to have the commitment fade away because burgers in a box was too cheap and too fast, and a table for two at a swanky suburban restaurant costs the same as last month's phone bill?

Never fear, because if you're looking for food — great food, well prepared food, food with style, and consistent quality, at below-market prices, check out the local school scene and find out what student chefs are cooking up.

Delicious lunches

North, east, south or west, culinary arts programs featured at our learning institutions are by far the best. Lunch specialties include homemade soups, the kind momma used to make, mostly made from scratch, and entrees that have the students learning as much about ethnic cuisine as Vice President Al Gore on a Middle Eastern fact finding trip.

Desserts brim with the likes of fresh cream and shaved chocolate with crusts so light and flaky they must have been made by little old ladies who still wear curlers and babushkas. Hardly.

Today's culinary arts student is being introduced to the high-tech art of culinary trends and happenings. They're also learning about kitchen management, personnel, public relations, purchasing, and everything else that has to do with running a restaurant in today's "let's dine out" society.

Learning by doing

Now this isn't to say that all good chefs graduate from classy colleges. Anticipating the trend toward vocational education, and allowing high school students a chance to see what the real working world is all about, most local school districts are offering a commercial foods course that gives teenagers an in-depth look at running a restaurant from the front of the house (dining room) all the way down to the basement where supplies are stored.

Add to this a professional cast of some of the best known culinary artists to supervise the kitchen, and you have a lucrative alternative to what used to be a "sit-at-your-desk-and-do-this" learning program.

High school students today are getting hands-on experience in their commercial foods classes. They're learning how to cut a side of beef, and turn blocks of ice into sculpture with a high powered chain saw. Spun sugar desserts and quantity baking, along with all the aspects of running a restaurant as a business, are now taught in high school.

Some school districts are even climbing on the bandwagon by offering their commercial foods program to night school students, not as a continuing education program, but as a credited program.

Gourmet entrees

Enough of the background; let's get down to what these programs do best — food. Recent visits to student-run restaurants had me sampling the wares of junior chefs with such exemplary fare like Poached Eggs Blackstone, a minestrone soup that would have brought Pavlov to his knees, even a table-side preparation of flaming Steak Diane.

If you are worried that your taste buds would never appreciate the likes of Shrimps Provençal, all of the programs offer outrageous sandwiches like hot ham and cheese on grilled sourdough, homemade fries, and a not-so-basic plate called "Beth's Tuna Supreme" — plate bread stuffed with the freshest tuna salad, lettuce and tomatoes. At a buck fifty yet. Can you believe it?

Add to those goodies the fact that all of these culinary institutions do catering in one form or another, and put out some of the best buffets money can buy. Many schools offer a snack bakery where students can bake you anywhere from one to 200 dozen cookies, special cakes, tortes and whatever.

Before you go to lunch at a student-run restaurant, it's best to call ahead, not necessarily to make reservations, but just to make sure of the hours. Prices vary and alcohol is a no-no, except for the chef adding a pinch of the stroganoff or whatever.

These restaurants are the best kept secrets of the staff that work in the buildings. You will not be disappointed, and furthermore, you will be helping the student chefs by supporting their programs.

One word to the wise: Remember that these are "learning programs" and if you're looking for a place to have a "power lunch" or are in a hurry, come back when you can sit down, relax and enjoy.

To leave a message for Chef Larry Janes, dial 953-2047 on a Touch-Tone phone, then mailbox number 1886. Please leave your name and phone number so he can return a call.



SHARON LEMIEUX/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Cooking lesson: Chef Kevin Enright shows Shannon Thorne, John Sutton, and Daniel Novak how to make stir-fry at Oakland Community College.

Serve & Learn

RESTAURANTS PUT STUDENT CHEFS TO TEST



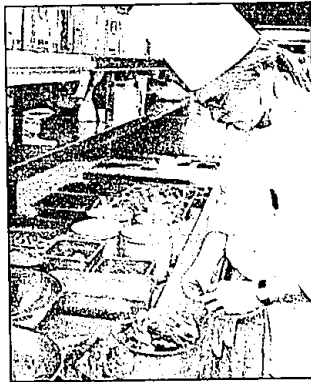
BY KEELY WYGONIK
STAFF WRITER

Oakland Community College nursing students Dawn Ehrmantraut, Stacy Banaszak and Lauri Slinchcomb were looking for a place to unwind, relax and have lunch. Their nutrition teacher suggested a place, right on campus — the Ridgewood Cafe.

They couldn't believe the prices — \$1 for chicken gumbo soup, \$2.45 for a hamburger deluxe. "It's excellent," they said in agreement, nodding their heads between bites.

Sitting at a table for two along a wall of windows that looked out a snowy field dotted with trees

See SERVE, 2B



JIM JAGDFELD/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Finishing touches: Chris Pawenski makes a salad for a customer in the kitchen at Schoolcraft College.



SHARON LEMIEUX/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Perfect finish: Dianne Buszka serves dessert to Rita Shaghnaysy under the watchful eye of Chef Leopold Schaeli.

Friendly service: Walter Banks serves Horace Abbott lunch at the Ridgewood Cafe at Oakland Community College.

COLLEGE RESTAURANTS

- Schoolcraft College**
 18600 Haggerty Road, Livonia, 462-4488
American Harvest Restaurant
 Hours: Lunch served 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday. Buffet served on Fridays. Restaurant will close April 30 and reopen in September.
- Oakland Community College**
 Orchard Ridge Campus
 27055 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills, 471-7780
Ridgewood Cafe
 Hours: Lunch served 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Thursday until April 21. Restaurant will reopen in September.
- Henry Ford Community College**
 6101 Evergreen Road, Dearborn, 845-9642
Gate Room
 Hours: Lunch seating at 11 a.m. and 12:15 p.m. Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Dinner served Wednesdays, 6 p.m. and 7:15 p.m. Restaurant will close April 22 and reopen in September.
- High School/Commercial Food Programs**
 Bentley Center, 15125 Farmington Road, Livonia, 623-0039
Bentley Cafe
 Hours: Sweet rolls and coffee in the morning, cafeteria style lunches. Open 8:30 a.m. to 1:15 p.m. Monday through Friday during the school year. Restaurant will close June 4 and reopen in September.
- William Ford Vocational/Technical Center**
 36455 Marquette, Westland, 595-2135
Cafe Marquette
 Hours: Lunch is served noon to 1:15 p.m. Tuesday through Friday until May 27. Restaurant will reopen in October. Buffet dinner served 4:45-6:15 p.m. Thursdays through June 10.



SHARON LEMIEUX/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Tableside cooking: Jake Kline, wearing a Mardi Gras costume, watches as Jon Burton prepares bananas foster.