

# New Orleans style steak house comes to Troy

BY SUSAN DEMAGGIO  
DEATY WRITER

Hers is a classic rags to riches story — er, make that hamburger to filet mignon story and you've met Ruth Fertel of Ruth's Chris Steak House fame.

In fact, in 1995 Fertel won the nation's Horatio Alger award (along with The Golden Plate Award, and the Beef Backers Award) for her years of hard work and success in the very finicky restaurant business.

Recently, the 67-year-old millionaire was in Troy to celebrate the opening of her 62nd steak house on Big Beaver, just west of I-75 in the Top of Troy building. The New Orleans native brought her southern charm to town along with her world-famous paying her college bills on a \$400-a-week lab tech salary from Tulane Med School.

"I felt if I could just own my own business I could do it," she said. "I started going through the local newspaper classifieds under 'Businesses for sale,' and passing the service stations and

**Ruth's Chris Steak House.**  
Where: 785 W. Big Beaver Road, on the ground floor of the Top of Troy building, adjacent to I-75, exit (410) 209-5422 for reservations.  
Hours: 5-11 a.m. Monday-Saturday; 5-9:30 p.m. Sunday.  
Cost: Dinner is a la carte; entrees range from \$12 to \$33. All major credit cards accepted.  
Remarks: There are two private rooms for parties seating 15-30. Ruth's Chris features a granite-topped mahogany bar, and four separate, distinct dining areas for 200 guests. The decor is traditional with a club feel.

lounges, I found a 17-table steak house advertised for \$18,000. I thought, I can do that."

She laughed when she recalled how naively she requested \$18,000 from a banker who warned her that she could lose her sole possession a \$50,000 home, if the restaurant wasn't successful, and how based on her determination, he loaned her \$22,000 — "\$4,000 extra for supplies and stocks."

Today, she sells about 10,000 steaks a day from Manhattan to Dallas to Taipei, Japan, with sales for 1996-97 projected at

\$160 million.

"I taught myself how to hand-cut beef loins and broil steaks," she recalled. "I worked 10-hour days, seven days a week. The restaurant was an instant success. In the first six months I cleared more than double my previous yearly salary."

But all was not topped with mushrooms and steak sauce. She weathered a hurricane which left her with no electricity and \$3,500 worth of meat getting warm in the refrigerator. So she quickly cooked all the steaks on her gas stove and fed them to hurricane victims. In 1973, a fire destroyed her original location but within a week she opened a larger one four blocks down the steaks, and changed the name to Ruth's Chris steak house. She opened a second restaurant in Metairie, a New Orleans suburb and in 1977, started granting franchises to expand under local ownership.

How does she do it when '90s diners are avoiding red meat and sipping raw carrot juice while jogging on their treadmills?

"Oh, a steak dinner in a fine restaurant is wonderful. It's fun. It's a treat," she insisted. "We all work so hard today it's become a lifestyle to dine out and be good to yourself. It's a bunch of bull to

read that people are not eating a lot of meat. No one ever says, 'I'll bet you a fish dinner we're gonna win the game!' It's always, 'I'll bet you a steak!'"

Families and business diners alike, appreciate the Ruth's Chris Steak House portions, 12- to 18-ounces "because a larger cut of meat retains its natural juices during cooking."

The restaurant uses only fresh, corn-fed Midwest U.S. prime beef. It is never frozen. The steaks are cut on the premises and served sizzling tableside to the customer's specifications from specially built broilers which reach 1,700 to 1,800 degrees F. The steaks come topped with a pat of butter on china platters heated to 600-degrees.

Fertel suggests the New York strip, cream spinach and potatoes au gratin. "But the fillet is our post popular," she pointed out. "The average dinner check comes to about \$40-\$45 per person."

To complement the meal, a wine list with about 70 labels features California, French and Italian vintages.

The menu also offers live Maine Lobster, U.S. prime lamb, veal and pork chops. There are



Steak house fare: Leonard Jump, general manager, and Chef J.P. McNeil sample some of the house specialties at Ruth's Chris Steak House, "Home of Serious Steaks."

nine potato entrees and a variety of fresh-cooked vegetable dishes. Desserts include blueberry cheesecake, bread pudding with whiskey sauce, apple or pecan pie ala mode and ice cream freezes like amaretto, praline

and raspberry Ruth.

The Troy location is owned by prime Steak of Troy, Thomas Moran chairman and Stan Harris president. Leonard Jump manages the restaurant.

## RESTAURANT SPECIALS

Send information about special dinners, new restaurants, restaurant renovations, restaurant anniversaries, and menu changes for consideration in Restaurant Specials to: Keely Wygonik, Taste/Entertainment editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc., 30251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150. Or fax information to (313) 591-7279.

### DINNER THEATER

• "Just Be Patient," 7 p.m. Fridays and 6 p.m. Saturdays, Genetti's Hole-In-The-Wall — 108 E. Main, Northville, (810) 349-0522, seven course meal along with show. "Just Be Patient," is a musical comedy

spin-off from the hit TV series "E.R." Laugh with the characters as they involve the audience.

• All the Only is appearing with magic at your table, 7-9 p.m. Wednesdays at Kiernan's Steak House, 21931 Michigan Ave., Dearborn (313) 565-8975 and 6:30-8:30 p.m. Saturdays at Wagon Wheel Saloon, 2950 Rochester Road, Troy (810) 689-8194.

### MEXUS

• Tres Vite Restaurant, 2203 Woodward Ave. in Detroit's Theatre District, (313) 964-4144, recently introduced new lunch and dinner menus offering more taste and variety. Corporate

Chef Michael Prainito has created a varied menu that celebrates the fragrant spices of Italy and familiarity of homegrown flavors. Pasta dishes include lemon-pepper fettucini covered with grilled chicken, wild mushrooms, minced scallions in a lemon-butter sauce, also penne pasta sauteed with fresh spinach, Italian cheeses and prosciutto, then blended with a rich palamino sauce. Hours are 11:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday; 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday; 5-10 p.m. Saturday; and 5-7 p.m. Sunday. (if there is a show at the Fox Theatre).



Good food: No matter what you're hungry for, you're sure to find something good to eat at Michigan Tastefest, which features a "taste" of over 45 metro restaurants.

## Sample restaurant specialties at Tastefest

You can sample the specialties of some of metro Detroit's finest restaurants, and specialty food providers, July 3-7 at Michigan Tastefest in Detroit's new Center Area — West Grand Boulevard (between Woodward Ave. and the Lodge Freeway, adjacent to the General Motors and Fisher buildings). Hours are 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Wednesday, July 3 to Saturday, July 6; and 11:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sunday, July 7. There is plenty of preferred \$2, and free

parking adjacent to the festival.

Tastefest offers five days of family fun with great tastes in food and music. More than 45 metro restaurants will sell "tastes" of their most popular dishes. Free concerts will be presented on three stages.

Taste tickets for food and beverage purchases will be sold throughout the festival site — nine tickets for \$5. Participating restaurants and food providers include:

The Royal Onk Brewery, Big Fish Too, Pegasus in the Fisher, Great Harvest Breek Company of Northville, Fox & Hounds Bakery Den, Jacoby's since 1904, Under the Eagle, Steak & Ale Restaurants, Pike Street Restaurant, Il Centro Ristorante, East Franklin Restaurant, Sunrise Sunset Saloon, Twingo's French Cafe, Bangkok Cuisine, Harbor House, National Coney Island, Mario's, Savino Sorbet, Stroch Ice Cream, and Pita Express.

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## Cultural Arts Award

Nomination Form

I (we) nominate the following as the most outstanding organization who has done the most to further the arts in the Birmingham-Bloomfield area during 1995-1996.

The award is presented annually to the organization that has done the most to further the arts in the Birmingham-Bloomfield area during 1995-1996.

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This award is sponsored by The Birmingham-Bloomfield Cultural Council, The Community House, Birmingham Principal Shopping District, Birmingham-Bloomfield Art Association, and The Eccentric Newspapers.

Nominations are due by July 31, 1996. Please send to:  
The Birmingham-Bloomfield Cultural Arts Award  
c/o The Birmingham Eccentric  
805 E. Maple  
Birmingham, MI 48009

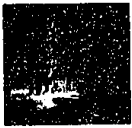
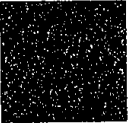
Or, you may fax your nomination to (810) 644-1314.  
Please call Sue Willis at (810) 901-2560 prior to faxing.

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