

DINING

Fishbone's takes New Orleans cuisine to Southfield

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

Gary Rumpff, general manager of the creole/cajun Fishbone's Rhythm Kitchen Cafe, gets straight to the punch when he describes his restaurant's new location in Southfield.

"We are extremely, extremely authentic in our food. It's good or better than what you'd find in New Orleans," the Grosse Pointe Woods resident said.

Maybe that's because the meats and other foods served at Fishbone's are shipped directly from Louisiana.

"We buy a lot of our food from Louisiana, right out of New Orleans. We buy all that from down there and ship things up here. It's expensive but it's worth it."

Fishbone's has an extensive menu of traditional Louisiana-style food; 54 dishes are available for dinner. Meals range from po-boy sandwiches made with fried shrimp or catfish, to hamburgers, to stuffed seafood founder, filet mignon, whiskey broux platters, and fried seafood. Seafoods, stonks, chops and chicken are grilled, broiled or braised. Fishbone's method of blackening food that uses a milder, more flavorful blend of spices and herbs.

Fishbone's counts among its specialties crawfish etouffee, jambalaya, catfish achi-falaya, snapper beauselle, and zydeco chicken.

Bite-sized marinated, deep-fried (alligator, woodcock, boudreaux sausage platter, and broux caviar are examples of the 24 items on the appetizer menu.

Menu prices range from \$3.95 to \$9.95 for appetizers, \$3.50 to

Fishbone's Rhythm Kitchen Cafe

Where: 29244 Northwestern Highway, Southfield.

Hours: 11 a.m. to midnight Mondays through Thursdays, 11 a.m. to 2 a.m. Fridays and Saturdays.

10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sundays for a jazz brunch with dinner following from 2 p.m. to midnight.

Credit cards: All major credit cards accepted.

Information: (810) 351-2925.

The original Fishbone's is located at 400 Monroe Street in the International Center Building in Detroit. That restaurant can be reached at (313) 965-4600.

\$4.95 for soup, \$10.95 to \$21.95 for dinners, \$1.95-\$7.95 for salads (Galveston Shrimp Salad, Pirate's Alley Olive Salad), \$5.95 to \$6.95 for sandwiches, and \$2.50 to \$3.95 for desserts.

Fishbone's drink list includes five house wines (Merlot, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, White Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon), 20 different bottled beers (everything from Blackened Voodoo to Red Stripe to Miller Genuine Draft), and six draft beers. The house drink is a hurricane, a mixture of light and dark rum and fruit juices.

Another in the long list of unique items at Fishbone's is its variety of non-alcoholic drinks made with non-alcoholic liquors like peach schnapps, amaretto, triple sec and coffee liqueur.

"We have a lot of people that request non-alcoholic drinks. It's

been on the market for years. It's just a matter of people having the desire to sell it," Rumpff said about the drinks.

Fishbone's has long been considered to be one of the best restaurants in the area - by locals and out-of-towners. Celebrities ranging from actors and actresses to musicians frequent the original location, which opened five years ago at 400 Monroe St. in Detroit's International Center Building. Although it has a haughty clientele, Rumpff stressed that Fishbone's is a casual restaurant.

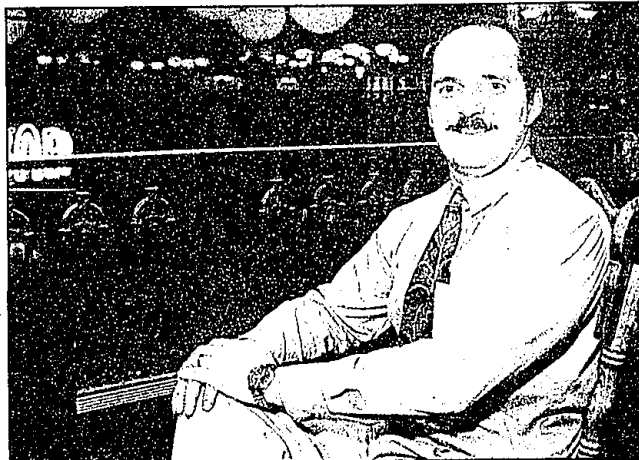
"At Fishbone's I've seen people come in wearing Levi's and I've seen people come in wearing tuxedos. It's a place to see and be seen. ... Fishbone's isn't one of those restaurants that you stop in just because you're driving by it. People go to Fishbone's for a reason. We do have a great reputation," Rumpff said.

Fishbone's management looked for years for a suburban location to open a second restaurant and settled on the former home to Carlos Murphy restaurant. The original plan was to remodel slightly, however, those plans changed.

"It was supposed to be more of a decorative remodel but turned out to be not only a structural, but a gutting. As we got involved in it more, we just realized that it wasn't as ready as we thought it was going to be in the beginning. So we ended up deciding to spend the extra money and do it right."

Once the restaurant opens Thursday, Dec. 12, the waitlist will have gone through 55 hours of intensive training.

"It's a unique menu and they



STAFF PHOTO BY LAWRENCE R. MCKEE

Opening today: Fishbone's restaurant, specializing in cajun and creole food, opens its Southfield location Thursday, Dec. 12. General Manager Gary Rumpff said Fishbone's food rivals anything you'll find in New Orleans.

have to know about every single item on the menu - what it looks like, what it tastes like, where the food comes from," Rumpff added.

The staff is also able to suggest to people who have food allergies or intolerances, and dietary restrictions which dishes

are good for them.

"They know what's in every single item from the spices to the main ingredients."

Executive Chef Faiz Albanna, formerly of the Detroit Yacht Club, will be able to oversee the restaurant through a glassed-in kitchen overlooking the open-air

restaurant. Large, spherical lamps light the room speckled by pedestal sinks available for patrons to wash their hands. The floors are tiled in keyboard and crawfish patterns.

"It's definitely a fun, festive atmosphere. It's noisy. It's not a place for a quiet dinner for two."

RESTAURANT SPECIALS

Send information for Restaurant Specials to: Kelly Wagonik, Taste/Entertainment Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc., 36261 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, or fax (313) 591-7279.

HOLIDAY DINNERS

Schoolcraft College - Madrigal dinner, 7:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday, Dec. 12-13, and invite you to join in this traditional Wassail feast and abundant holiday merriment. Royalty and their guests will dine in the Waterman Center on campus, 18600 Haggerty Road, Livonia. The cost is \$35 per person, call (313) 462-4417 for reservations. Festivities commence as the Madrigal Singers, under the direction of conductor Steve

SeGraves, enter the hall in costume to present the Wassail and toast the season. Diners will then partake of the prime rib menu's many courses, each presented to the court with trumpet fanfare and ceremony. The bill of fare includes assorted breads and rolls, mixed greens with dried fruits and nuts, celeriac and potato gratin, glazed carrots and leeks, broccoli florets, and cranberry and orange steamed pudding with apricot-cinnamon cream glaze. Throughout the evening, the dulcet tones of Good Neighbors All provide music on period instruments, the Madrigal Singers intone songs of the season, and magician/jester

Steve Ryder, a regular performer at the Michigan Renaissance Festival, will amaze and delight.

Henry Ford Estate - Celebrate a Centennial Christmas at the Henry Ford Estate on the campus of The University of Michigan-Dearborn, 4901 Evergreen, Dearborn. For reservations/information, call (313) 693-6590.

Annual favorites include: "Tea, Tour and Christmas Treasures" (Dec. 12 and 13); Santa's Workshop (Dec. 13); the "Candles and Carols Dinners" (Dec. 15); and Candlelight Tours (Dec. 26).

28). Holiday luncheon concerts, featuring classical and traditional sounds of Christmas, will be presented 11:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Dec. 12 and 13 in the Pool Restaurant. The cost is \$19.95. Call number listed above for reservations.

At the "Candles and Carols Dinner," guests will be welcomed by the warmth and spicy aromas of wassail, dine in the glow of candlelight, and end the evening with music of the season. The cost is \$38 per person, call for reservations.

Eagle Tavern - Spend a holiday evening at Eagle Tavern in Greenfield Village, (At Oakwood and Village Road) Dearborn. The cost is \$50 per person, which includes dinner, entertainment, tax, gratuity and a memento of the evening. For program dates and more information, call (313) 271-1620.

History Holly Hotel - 110 Battle Alley's annual Victorian Feast is 6-11 p.m. Monday, Dec. 23. Old-English menu from the late 1800s featuring Roast Christmas Goose and Steamed English Bread Pudding for

dessert. Cost \$19.95 per person, reservations a must, call (810) 634-5208.

MENU SPECIAL

East Side Mario's second annual Garlic Festival through Jan. 5 at its Southfield, (29267 Southfield Road 810-669-9454), Livonia, (31363 Plymouth Road, 313-513-8803) and Rochester Hills (2273 Crooks Road, 810-853-9822) locations. Holiday celebration of Italian cuisine featuring four new garlic-enhanced entrees.

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• Chicken Lasagna... **\$8.95**

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