

DINING

Restaurant sommeliers practice art and craft

BY ELEANOR HEALD
SPECIAL WRITER

If you've wondered what makes fine dining service a cut above, a sommelier with an internationally recognized diploma ranks at the top of the list.

Sommelier (pronounced so-mel-ee-ay) is the masculine French word for wine specialist or restaurant wine waiter. While the world of sommeliers remains largely male, increasingly, a number of top professionals are female. In the Detroit metropolitan area, three women hold internationally recognized sommelier diplomas.

Golden Mushroom

Distinguished by world-renowned Champagne Ruinart as Best Young French Sommelier in 1994, French native Marlene Vendramelli-Pouyegour is now making her mark in the United States. Hired recently as sommelier at the Golden Mushroom in Southfield, she is responsible for selecting wines to complement the restaurant's award-winning menu. She uses her extensive wine knowledge to aid diners in selecting wines to complement chosen menu offerings.

Vendramelli, who is 30, and uses her maiden name professionally, was the first female sommelier to write a column for "Cuisine et Vins de France," a monthly French food and wine magazine.

In 1988, she earned a sommelier diploma from Lycée Hotelier de Bordeaux. Continuing her studies, she was awarded a degree in wine tasting from the University of Bordeaux in 1994.

"Preparing to work in the hotel and restaurant industry as a sommelier in France requires knowledge of restaurant business, management, service and classical cooking in addition to

understanding how wine is made and best served," Vendramelli explained.

Her French work experience includes sommelier at Michelin one-star Hotel Restaurant Francis Durrone in Villeneuve de Marsais in the Armagnac region and at the one Michelin-star Le Pré Catelan restaurant in Paris. There she was responsible for a 50,000 bottle wine cellar with 900 selections valued at over \$1 million. In 1994, she put her career on hold and came to the United States with her husband, Serge, so he could pursue his career with Valeo Climate Control, an automotive supplier in Auburn Hills.

For her first three years in Michigan, Vendramelli, who lives in Rochester Hills, concentrated on learning to speak English fluently. She continued to study about wine and made trips to California to learn about America's premier wine industry.

"A sommelier must be an artist who understands nature," Vendramelli said. "Wine is art in the making, from the time grapes are harvested until the wine is drunk. Everything that surrounds winemaking is a craft. So, I think it is correct to say that a sommelier practices the art and craft of wine."

Vendramelli also considers herself as an ambassador. "I make the transition between a bottle of wine and its ultimate enjoyment with food created by Executive Chef Dorin Moore and his staff," she continued. "I love to please people and I can do this when diners ask me for a wine recommendation."

Reid Ashton founder/president of the Golden Mushroom is the proud owner of one of the most extensive restaurant wine cellars (more than 800 selections) in Michigan. Vendramelli noted

that the strength of the Golden Mushroom list is older vintages with a number of estate Burgundies and a large selection of California cabernet sauvignon and merlot.

American sommeliers at the top of the "pro" list have earned Master Sommelier recognition from the Court of Master Sommeliers, established in England in 1977. The title Master Sommelier marks the highest recognition of wine, liquor and beverage service professionalism. Three education stages are involved: basic certification course, advanced sommelier course and the Master Sommelier diploma granted after a rigorous examination. On average, it takes three to five years to complete courses and pass examinations. There are 35 Master Sommeliers in the U.S. and 90 in the world. Of the American Master Sommeliers, 29 are men and six are women.

Unique Restaurant Corp.

Madeline Triffon, Beverage Director for the Unique Restaurant Corp. in Bingham Farms, was the first American woman to earn the Master Sommelier title in 1987.

Triffon is responsible for beverage selection and service at Sebastian's Grill, Troy; Morels in Bingham Farms; Tavern on 13, Bingham Farms; No. VI Chop-house & Lobster Bar, Novi; Northern Lakes Seafood Company, Bloomfield Hills; and Relish, Farmington Hills. Because she has duties at many restaurants, Triffon trains wine service staff at each location.

Triffon offered the following sound-bites on her job. "If a sommelier genuinely understands the art of service, which pre-supposes a generosity of spirit, a diner will be the lucky



Enhancing dining experiences: French native Marlene Vendramelli is new sommelier at the Golden Mushroom in Southfield.

recipient of a body of experience, a commodity far more precious than knowledge. One gets information free of charge (except for the cost of the wine) and with a gracious, comforting, cheerful smile to boot!"

The Whitney

In November 1997 following an examination in London, England, Claudia Tyagi, dining room manager at The Whitney restaurant in Detroit, became a Master Sommelier.

"A Master Sommelier diploma

identifies technical correctness," Tyagi said. "Whether that's temperature of service, decanting wine or using proper glassware, each wine can be shown to its greatest advantage."

"A sommelier reduces the risk for diners who like to be adventurous with food and wine pairings. They can push the envelope further because I'm there to make recommendations and give feedback. Great food and wine harmony is as exhilarating as completing a dance with a great partner."

Tipping an accredited sommelier is not required, but appreciated. A standard is \$5-\$10 per person above the gratuity. Present the amount to the sommelier personally or create a line below "tip" on a credit card receipt.

You can experience the cooperative efforts of a sommelier and chef at an upcoming Golden Mushroom Dinner: Tuesday, Feb. 24, Russian Dinner \$86 (plus tax and gratuity) per person, call (248) 559-4230.

WHAT'S COOKING

OLD COUNTRY BUFFET

Invites all couples who have been married 50 or more years to stop by for free lunch or dinner through Feb. 14. All the couple needs is their marriage certificate to enjoy one free meal each.

VALENTINE'S DAY DINING

Cafe Cortina, 30715 W. 10 Mile Road, Farmington Hills (248) 474-3033, Host.

ing an elegant Mardi Gras dinner, Venetian style with music and dancing, 7 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 18, the cost is \$65 per person, call for reservations.

Emly's, 505 N. Center, Northville (248) 349-0505

Fleetwood on Sixth, 209 W. 6th St., Royal Oak (248) 541-8050

Golden Mushroom, 18100 W. 10 Mile Road, Southfield (248) 559-4230

Il Posto, 29110 Franklin Road, Southfield (248) 827-8070

Marco's 32758 Grand River, downtown Farmington (248) 477-7777

Morels: A Michigan Bistro, 30100 Telegraph, Bingham Farms (248) 642-1094

Ocean Grille, 280 Old Woodward, Birmingham (248) 646-7001

Rugby Grille at The Townsend Hotel, 100 Townsend Street, Birmingham

Forté, 201 Old Woodward, Birmingham (248) 594-7300

Fox & Hounds, 1560 North Woodward, Bloomfield Hills (248) 644-4800

Oakland Grill, 28332 Woodward Ave., Royal Oak (248) 549-7700

Rochester Chop House, 306 Main St., Rochester (248) 651-2266

Mr. Z's STEAK HOUSE 537-5600
27331 Five Mile Rd. (Corner of Eastland)

Valentine's Day!
Celebrate with
ART OF FACT
Thurs. thru Sat.
Great Dinner Special

Try our fabulous Mr. Z's Aussie 12 oz. Center Cut Sirloin with 10 Herbs and Spices seared to your liking.

Disney ON ICE
HERCULES
PRODUCED BY FIELD ENTERTAINMENT

MAR. 3-8
Joe Louis Arena

CHARGE BY PHONE: (248) 645-6666 U.S. (519) 792-2222 Canada

MICHIGAN'S FINEST
GUN AND KNIFE SHOW
FEB. 13-14-15
FRI. 10-9 • SAT. 9-9 • SUN. 9-6

BUY TRADE SELL
SUPER DEALS ON AMMO
HANDGUNS • RIFLES • AMMO • SHOTGUNS
KNIVES • MILITARY SURPLUS • HUNTING & FISHING SUPPLIES • SAFES AND MUCH MORE!

FRIDAY IS SET-UP DAY. COME EARLY FOR YOUR BEST DEALS! Not All Dealers Participate On Friday.

Gibraltar
TRADE CENTER, INC.
1135 & LUREND RD. (EXIT 36) TAYLOR • 732-287-2000

FREE
FRIDAY ADDITION TO THE TRADE CENTER

FRIDAY SPECIAL
Fish & Chips
(baked or fried)
All you can eat
\$9.95

The Botsford Inn
Farmington Hills
(248) 474-4800

Bogie's
DINNER FOR TWO
Prime Rib
Soup & Salad
Dessert
\$29.95

19701 West 12 Mile
East of Evergreen
(formerly Fox Rd.)
248-559-4400

ENJOY AN EVENING WITH IRELAND'S FAVORITE BALLADEER PADDY REILLY
IN CONCERT FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 13TH
AT THE GAELIC LEAGUE IRISH AMERICAN CLUB
9:00 P.M. - TICKETS \$15.00
IRISH GIFT SHOP ON SITE!
FOR MORE INFO: 313-664-8700

8446 MICHIGAN AVE. • (JUSY WEST OF TIGER STADIUM) • DETROIT

DON PEDRO'S
Make St. Valentine's Dinner Reservations Today!
BY VALENTINE'S DAY SPECIALS

ONLY \$10.95
ULTIMATE DUO SAMPLER (FOR TWO)
Choice of steak or chicken fillet on corn, baked, beef, lamb, chicken, fish, or pork
Pinto beans, cheese enchilada, tomatillo sauce, guacamole, or sour cream. So much food that it's served on two plates.

24366 Grand River
(3 blocks W. of Telegraph)
OPEN 7 DAYS (210) 537-1450
\$3.99 LUNCH / \$4.99 DINNER SPECIALS
WED. MARGARITA MONDAYS \$1.25
Free Banquet Facilities

Good Thru 2/14/98
DON PEDRO'S
Fajitas for Two
with Dessert
ONLY \$18.95 plus tax

MITCH HOUSEY'S
DINNERS from \$6.95

Open 11 A.M.
Businessmen's Lunches
FROM \$5.95

FASHION SHOW
Thursday
Starting at Noon

FEB. SUPER DINNER SPECIAL
LOBSTER TAIL DINNER
\$16.95
Includes: Salad, Potatoes, Vegetable, and Hot Bread

NOW APPEARING... LIVE THE SHOWCASEMEN
WEDNESDAY THROUGH SATURDAY
COCKTAIL HOUR
MON. through FRI.
4-7 P.M. DAILY
BANQUET FACILITIES AVAILABLE

28500 Schumacher Rd. • Opposite Eastland Mall • Livonia
248-555-2200 • OPEN DAILY MON-SAT 11:00 A.M.

TICKETS ONLY \$9.47

EDDIE MONEY
WITH THE BRUISER BAND
AND MUDPUDDY
TOMORROW • 8PM
• GREAT SEATS STILL AVAILABLE •

94.7 WGSX
THE CLASSIC ROCK STATION

Tickets available at the Box Office
call (248) 372-0100

PALACE
THEATRE