

DINING

Zagat Survey serves up diners' views of best restaurants

BY ELIZABETH HEALD
SPECIAL WRITER

Tired of a critic downgrading a restaurant you like? Or conversely, heaping praise on one you dislike? Would the best rating come from surveying "real diners," folks like you, who love to eat out?

In the late 1970s, that's what Nina and Tim Zagat (rhymes with the cat) and a group of their New York City friends thought. By 1979, the Zagats created a new standard for the restaurant and travel guide business with introduction of their first Zagat Restaurant Survey.

The first survey polled 100 friends, colleagues and business clients. It was a photocopied list of 75 New York City restaurants with brief comments about each, on a single legal-size sheet of paper.

Between 1979 and 1983, the first formal publishing year for the Zagat Survey, the surveyor base mounted to 600, rating 300 New York restaurants. Their food passion and restaurant critic's hobby of eating the Zagats every year at the moment of time and nearly \$12,000 annually. It was time for now 65-year-old Nina

and her 57-year-old husband Tim, both Yale Law School graduates, to give up law practices and become publishing entrepreneurs.

TIME magazine praised the Zagat Survey as "gastromonomical democracy in action." And it is just that.

Today, a literal army of foodies, who volunteer to review restaurants in 40 cities, have created the restaurant guides known as Zagat Surveys. The 1998 edition billed as "America's Top Restaurants" \$12.95 can be found in all major area bookstores and at Williams-Sonoma locations in Troy, Ann Arbor, Livonia and Novi.

Under the chapter titled Detroit, 23 restaurants were rated by 1,200 volunteer surveyors. Not all are Detroit. Both the Rowe Inn and Tapewings in Ellsworth are deservedly included. Besting the area top 10 list are The Lark and The Golden Mushroom.

Zagat surveyors rate each restaurant on food, service and using a 0-30 scale. Scores of 20-25 are considered very good to excellent with 26-30 viewed as extraordinary to per-

fection. Cost reflects the estimated price of one dinner with one drink and tip. Lunch at the same entry is usually 25 percent less. Cost ratings are inexpensive, \$15 and under; Moderate \$16 to \$30; Expensive \$31 to \$50; and Very Expensive \$51 or more.

Surveyors comments are summarized by a paid local editor in each of the 40 cities. Literal comments are shown in quotation marks. Symbols indicate whether responses were mixed or uniform.

Zagat Surveys do not indicate whether alcohol, beer and/or wine are served. Gail Zarr, Zagat's managing editor said, "We believe most of the restaurants do have a license."

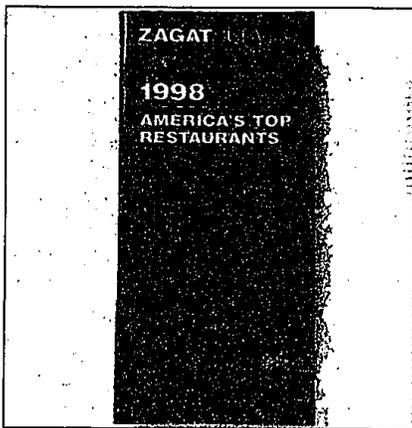
When I explained that's not the case for smaller, well-run, highly recommendable, usually ethnic restaurants in the metro-Detroit area, she responded, "We should probably look into including this alone salute to fine dining in Zagat Survey 1997 Update Michigan Restaurants, Focusing on Detroit and Environs. This \$9.95 pocket-size

book gives a more complete look at Michigan. While it sports last year, it is current, except for restaurants that opened in 1997. A Michigan Update is not on the drawing board until late 1998 or early 1999, so the 1997 edition is still the best for a broad overview.

But, that's where the Observer & Eccentric Entertainment section comes in. Each Thursday, Dining brings you news of what's new in the restaurant scene. If you need to see back Dining coverage and you have Internet access, contact the newspapers at www.oeonline.com for a cap-sulized review.

Zagat invites you to be a reviewer in their city Restaurant Surveys or in their nationwide Hotel Survey. To get contacted for the next Survey, send a business-size self-addressed stamped envelope to ZAGAT SURVEY, 4 Columbus Circle, New York, NY 10019 indicating the Survey in which you would like to participate.

When I explained that's not the case for smaller, well-run, highly recommendable, usually ethnic restaurants in the metro-Detroit area, she responded, "We should probably look into including this alone salute to fine dining in Zagat Survey 1997 Update Michigan Restaurants, Focusing on Detroit and Environs. This \$9.95 pocket-size



Dining guide: Zagat Survey of America's Top Restaurants includes 23 "tops" in Michigan.

WHAT'S COOKING

To share news about "What's Cooking" at your restaurant, send or fax information to Keely Wygonik, Entertainment Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36261 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150 or fax (734) 651-7279.

MAC & RAY'S
Michigan Culinary Food & Wine Extravaganza 6:30-10 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 24. To raise money for the Michigan Olympic Team and Scholarship Fund, 24 of the area's top chefs and restaurateurs present magnificent wine and food pairings under the theme "Celebrating Mardi Gras." Live entertainment provided by Skyline and the Back Street Horns band. General admission tickets \$75 per person or Gold Salon \$125 per person (available by phoning Mac & Ray's at 810) 463-9660 ext 427. The restaurant is at 30576 North River Rd, Harrison Township (less than three miles east of I-94, next to Selfridge Air National Guard Base).

MARVIN'S BISTRO
Offering two Feb. Tuesday Specials for \$8.95 each on Tuesday, Feb. 24 - Homemade Pierogi stuffed with potato, spinach and chicken topped off with a golden boulet sauce, or Homemade traditional cheese pierogi accompanied with sautéed cabbage and onions topped off with a sour cream dill sauce. Entrees include soup or salad, fresh vegetable medley.

Friday Lenten Specials - Homemade Manhattan Chowder or New England Chowder, two or more seafood specials Fridays during Lent such as marinated salmon, Maryland Crab Cakes, Lemon Sole Rebecca, Broiled Whitefish, Grilled Tuna with Citrus Sauce served with soup or salad, potato and vegetable medley. Cost will range from \$10.95 to \$13.95 for Lenten seafood specials.

Marvin's Bistro is at 16800 Middlebelt, Livonia, call (734)

522-5600 for information/reservations. Open 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday, Feb. 13, 4-11 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 14. Bar open until 2 a.m. next evening. Look for feature story about Marvin's Bistro on next week's Dining page in Entertainment.

STELLINE
Jimmy Schmidt closed his Stelline restaurant in the Somerset Collection on Jan. 15. His newest venture, Smitty's Grill in downtown Rochester, has been very successful since its opening in December. He believes the Rochester venue appeals to the same dining audience as did a Troy location.

Matt Prentice's Unique Restaurant Corporation will renovate the Stelline location to Portabella, a casual Italian restaurant. The planned opening is May. "The day it opens, we'll close Sebastian's," Prentice said.

But that's not all Prentice has on his plate. Flying Fish Tavern will open at the end of February in the former location of Memphis Smoke at Maple and Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield.

The menu will be similar to Tavern on Main in Birmingham, but exploiting the food concept a bit more, Prentice noted.

Duet, another Unique Restaurant Corporation restaurant, to be located in the building next to Orchestra Hall in Detroit, has been on the drawing board for some months. Planned opening is mid-April.

CHARLEY'S CRAB
Kenwood Winemaker's Dinner, 6 p.m. Monday, March 2. Cost \$75 per person, includes all taxes and gratuities. Try six of Sonoma County's Kenwood Vineyards wines at a six-course dinner. Does red wine go with fish? Try Kenwood Jack London Zinfandel with New Orleans Pecan Catfish with creole moussiere sauce as

the first of two entrees and decide! Reservations required. The restaurant is at 6498 Crooks Road, Troy, call (248) 879-2060.

NEW NAME
Saint Louis Bread with locations in West Bloomfield and Lathrup Village is unveiling its new name with a special ceremony and donation to local charities.

The neighborhood bakery-cafes will be known as Panera Bread. The new exterior signage was unveiled Tuesday, Feb. 17 by West Bloomfield Township Supervisor Juddy Hood and Lathrup Village Mayor Frank Brock. Panera Bread is seeking suggestions from its customers for local charities which deserve recognition.

In return, Panera Bread will donate 1,000 loaves of fresh-baked bread to these groups over the next month. Panera Bread also will donate 25 cents from the sale of each loaf of bread at each of the three Detroit-area bakery-cafes through Feb. 21 to Forgotten Harvest.

The West Bloomfield Panera Bread bakery cafe is at 6399 Orchard Lake Road, (248) 855-9209.

The Lathrup Village Panera Bread bakery cafe is at 27651 Southfield Road, (248) 443-0282.

The Novi location, 25876 Novi Road, (248) 374-1701 opened Nov. 19 as Panera Bread.

WINTERFEST BEER TASTING
Schoolcraft College Gourmet Club and Merchant's Fine Wine - Dearborn, Royal Oak and Milford is hosting the Third Annual Winterfest Beer Tasting, 7-9 p.m. Wednesday, February 25 at Schoolcraft College in the Waterman Center, 18600 Haggerty

Road, Livonia (one block west of I-275 between Six and Seven Mile Roads). The cost is \$30 per person, call (734) 462-4422 to order tickets.

The event will feature fine cuisine, e.g. Detroit or Hotel. Each from, tastings limited to 60, door prizes and complimentary tasting glass. Tickets can be purchased at the Student Activities Office, lower Waterman Center, or Merchant's Fine Wine location.

UNIQUE RESTAURANT CORPORATION
The Southwest Feast, Feb. 19 at Relish, 34555 W. 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills, (248) 489-8852; Feb. 21 at Sebastian's Grill, inside Somerset Collection South, Troy, (248) 649-6625.

Each feast begins at 6:30 p.m. The cost is \$24.95 per person, not including tax and gratuity. A wine package will be offered at an additional cost. Call the restaurant of your choice for reservations/information.

Menu features Soup Course - Comfort of Duck Pensole Soup, Ancho Chile & Terri's Cornish, First Course - Lobster & Crab meat Chile Relleno, Goat Cheese & Shellfish Ranchero Sauce; Principle Course - Lime-Marinated Block Island Swordfish, Tomatillo Bourre Blanc & Spanish Rice Pilaf; Grand Finale - Espresso Flan and Kahlua Caramel Sauce.

German Feast at Morels, 30100 Telegraph, Bingham Farms 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 25 features guest speaker Joe Schellach. Cost \$75 per person, including tax and gratuity. Call (248) 642-1094 for reservations. The event will feature seven wines and a special menu featuring Maine Lobster & Gulf Shrimp Tostada, Apricot Glazed

oysters with Romolade Sauce, Grilled Shrimp with Hickory Smoked Bacon & Lemon Barbecue Sauce, Buttermilk Bisuits with honey butter, Mixed Fresh Greens with Hearts of Palm, Almonds & Mustard-Hazelnut Vinaigrette, Champagne & Passionfruit Granite, Stone Crab Claws with mustard sauce or drawn butter, Lyonnaise Potatoes, Asparagus, Key Lime Tart with Pecan Crust & Coconut Meringue, Coffee, Bonbons. The restaurant is at 6430 Farmington Road (north of Maple Road) West Bloomfield. Call (248) 661-4666 for reservations/information.

EAST SIDE MARIO'S
"Two Hearts East as One" offer continues through the end of February. Four-course meal for two features vegetable soup or garden salad, garlic bread, Rotisserie Chicken Cacciatore served family style with Tiramisu for dessert. The cost \$21.99 per couple.

Golden Mushroom
Russian/Vodka Feast Tuesday, Feb. 24, cost \$85 per person. Menu features Smoked Roasted Sturgeon with Dark Rye, Sour Cream and Caviar Sauce, Roast Saddle of Lamb with Pomegranate Sauce, Cauliflower Gratin and Potato Pancakes. Golden Mushroom is at 18100 W. 10 Mile Road, at Southfield, call (248) 559-4230 for reservations and information.

THE LARK
Stone Crab Dinner 7 p.m. Monday or Tuesday, Feb. 23 or 24, Cost \$80 per person not including other beverages, tax or gratuity. Menu features fried

oysters with Romolade Sauce, Grilled Shrimp with Hickory Smoked Bacon & Lemon Barbecue Sauce, Buttermilk Bisuits with honey butter, Mixed Fresh Greens with Hearts of Palm, Almonds & Mustard-Hazelnut Vinaigrette, Champagne & Passionfruit Granite, Stone Crab Claws with mustard sauce or drawn butter, Lyonnaise Potatoes, Asparagus, Key Lime Tart with Pecan Crust & Coconut Meringue, Coffee, Bonbons. The restaurant is at 6430 Farmington Road (north of Maple Road) West Bloomfield. Call (248) 661-4666 for reservations/information.

EAST SIDE MARIO'S
"Two Hearts East as One" offer continues through the end of February. Four-course meal for two features vegetable soup or garden salad, garlic bread, Rotisserie Chicken Cacciatore served family style with Tiramisu for dessert. The cost \$21.99 per couple.

Golden Mushroom
Russian/Vodka Feast Tuesday, Feb. 24, cost \$85 per person. Menu features Smoked Roasted Sturgeon with Dark Rye, Sour Cream and Caviar Sauce, Roast Saddle of Lamb with Pomegranate Sauce, Cauliflower Gratin and Potato Pancakes. Golden Mushroom is at 18100 W. 10 Mile Road, at Southfield, call (248) 559-4230 for reservations and information.

THE LARK
Stone Crab Dinner 7 p.m. Monday or Tuesday, Feb. 23 or 24, Cost \$80 per person not including other beverages, tax or gratuity. Menu features fried

FRIDAY SPECIAL
Fish & Chips
(baked or fried)
All you Can Eat
\$9.95
The Watford Inn
Farmington Hills
(248) 474-4800

ROMANCE DEFINED.
romance (rō-māns, /also, for nō, rō-māns) n. 1. A powerful attraction. 2. A tendency to derive pleasure from romantic adventures. A delicious tale of wonderful and extraordinary events, characterized by much imagination and idealization. The quality or characteristics of excitement, love, and adventure. A love affair.

ROMANCE CONTINUED.
NOW IN ITS SEVENTH YEAR OF TORONTO'S GLORIOUS PAVILIONS THEATRE

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
IN TORONTO

CALL THE TICKET LINE
(416) 872-7272
NO RES. A DAY, 7 DAYS A WEEK
www.phantomoftheopera.com

U.S. DOLLAR ADVANTAGE!
You could save 4% more!
*on all purchases over \$100

Mr. Z's STEAK HOUSE 537-5600
17331 Five Mile Rd. (Corner of Inland)
DAILY SPECIALS
Monday and Tuesday
\$2.00 off all steak dinners on regular menu
Wednesday Pasta Day Your Choice \$6.50 Select Menu
Thursday Complimentary Dessert \$4.95
Friday Fish & Chips w/Cole Slaw \$4.95
Saturday Alaskan Snow Crab Legs \$11.95
Open Sunday 12-3 p.m. Complimentary Dessert

DON PEDRO'S
AUTHENTIC MEXICAN CUISINE
24386 Grand River (3 blocks W. of Telegraph)
CARRY OUT (913) 537-1450

BANQUET FACILITIES
From 25 People to Up to 100
Home of the Best \$7.95 American Banquet Buffet
\$3.99 LUNCH SPECIALS
\$4.99 DINNER SPECIALS
1/2 OFF DINNER
Buy 1 dinner, 2nd meal of equal or lesser value 1/2 price
Does not include gratuity
Open Daily, 11:30 a.m. - 10:00 p.m.

MITCH HOUSEY'S
Open 11 A.M.
Businessmen's Lunches FROM \$5.95
DINNERS from \$6.95

FASHION SHOW
Thursday Starting at Noon

PRINCE OF PEAS DINNER SPECIAL
LOBSTER TAIL DINNER \$16.95
Includes: Salad, Potatoes, Vegetable and Hot Bread

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

25000 Southfield Rd. (Opposite Lathrup) MIK - 11500th
SOUTHFIELD, MI 48033
OPEN DAILY MON-THUR 11:30-11:00 P.M. FRI-SAT 11:30-12:00 A.M.

The Irish are coming to Troy!

O'Grady's Irish Pub
will feature the best in homemade food
Enjoy Irish Pub with an open floor plan that's great for families socializing, entertainment and meeting friends

Quality Home Cooking with Chef Jim Bolton
Entertainment 18 TV's, darts, pool tables and live performance
Full Bar Service with large selection of Domestic and Imported Beers • Guinness

595 W. BIG BEAVER
248-524-4770
Formerly Herchel's Deli - Just East of I-75 next to Drury Inn Hotel