

DINING

Portabella in Troy's Somerset South - that's Italian!

BY ELEANOR HEALD SPECIAL WRITER The second level of Somerset Collection South has taken on a new look. Awnings and large deck umbrellas help create the feeling of outdoors, and shelter tables in front of the stylish Italian cafe Portabella.

Where: 2745 W. Big Beaver Road, Troy, in Somerset Collection South, (second level, adjacent to sky bridge) (248) 649-6625. Hours: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday-Saturday, noon to 5 p.m. Sunday. Menu: Italian with creative diversions. Many dishes play on the portabella mushroom theme. Cost: Starters and pizzas \$5-8; sandwiches and salads \$6.50-10; pastas \$7-10; and main plates \$12-15. Pastas and main plates come with bread and choice of minestrone or salad. Reservations: For parties of six or more. Credit cards: All majors accepted.



"Unique Restaurant" Executive Chef Jason Chludzinski, (left) and Managing partner Michael Ziegler at the newly opened Portabella on the second level of Somerset Collection South.

Way. Choices are linguine, angel hair or bow tie with marinara, Alfredo or zesty Bolognese sauce. Add grilled chicken, steamed vegetables or sautéed rock shrimp for a little extra.

On the light side, a Portabella Sandwich on parmesan pesto ciabatta (dense, Italian-style sourdough bread) is stuffed with grilled portabellas, tomato, fontina, pesto nioli and baby greens. Spiedini, a classic Italian sandwich, is crammed with capicola ham, fontina, tomatoes, fresh basil on sourdough, grilled with parmesan batter.

Two meal-size salads are new Jim Barnett creations. Italian Chopped Salad is vegetables, garbanzo beans, black olives, hard beef salami and provolone tossed with balsamic vinaigrette. Grilled Portabella and Maytag Bleu has assorted greens, grilled asparagus, roasted peppers and croutons tossed with balsamic vinaigrette.

This Italian-friendly menu is deftly executed by 23-year-old Executive Chef Jason Chludzinski, a Macomb County Community College culinary grad. He's been in URC kitchens for five years.

"Italian food is quite regional," he said. "I want to be part of creating its distinction, blending

the best of regional foods to make a creative plate from scratch, with the freshest ingredients and all the charm of Italy."

Portabella has a full-service bar and a solid offering of beers. But what URC's wine director Master Sommelier Madeline Trifon proves is that a wine list need not be long to be great. Most wines are either Italian imports or Italian varietals from California. More than two dozen are available by the glass.

Available only by the bottle is one terrific wine - 1995 Ferrari-Carano Steno, a blend of sangiovese, cabernet sauvignon and malbec, a steal at \$45 on a restaurant wine list.

With the opening of Portabella, URC's Sebastian's Grill closed, but Cafe Jardin is open. Local patrons of Sebastian's will find the same cordial managing partner Michael Ziegler, attentive as always. But he maintains, "I'm only as good as my staff."

And so, you may wonder why the changes. "Our lease was up at Sebastian's and that property needed major remodeling," Unique Restaurant's founder Matt Prentice said. "When we opened Sebastian's in 1984, Somerset South had only one

level. We've witnessed all the changes at Somerset, and now we're making one ourselves.

"The new second level location is ideal. When we were making decisions months ago, Jim [Barnett] and I counted the sky bridge foot traffic. We'll now have 10 times the number of

people passing by and seeing us in operation.

"Portabella does not have an approved spelling. Sometimes it's spelled with an 'o' but we thought Portabella sounded more Italian. It's the hottest mushroom going and when grilled, it's close to the flavor

and texture of steak - very vegetarian friendly."

WHAT'S COOKING

What's Cooking features restaurant openings and renovations, menu specials, and anniversaries. Send addresses to: Entertainment Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, Inc., 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150 or fax (734) 591-7275.

BENEFITS

GREAT LAKES - GREAT WINE WALK AROUND TASTING Features award-winning Great Lakes wine, including Ontario's Ice Wine, and appetizers from top area restaurants such as Diamond Jim Brady's, Fox and Hound's, Mac and Rays, and Relish, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 3, Oakland Community College, Orchard Ridge Campus, 1-696 at Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills. Tickets \$40 per person, call (248) 471-6340. Proceeds benefit scholarships for culinary arts and management students.

THE GARDEN PARTY

The St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center host The Garden Party, La Fete au Jardin, 1-6 p.m. Sunday,

June 7 in the gardens of the St. Vincent and Sarah Fisher Center, 2740 W. 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills. Event features entertainment, wines from around the world, and a variety of food prepared by 60 of metro Detroit's finest chefs to benefit the Center's programs for abused children and families in crisis. Tickets are \$125 per person; patron tickets \$300, and bonafide tickets \$600, also available. Call (248) 626-7527, Ext. 3115. Alexander Zonjic and Friends and Hugh Borde's Trinidad Tripoli Steel Band will be performing. There will be a wine auction and Beanie Baby Raffle, 4-6 p.m. Participating restaurants include Albert's Botto & Basket, Big Daddy's Parthenon, Bean's & Cornbread, Cafe Cortina, and Tribute.

FATHER'S DAY GOURMET JAZZ BRUNCH

Sponsored by the Michigan Jazz Festival and the Gourmet Club of Schoolcraft College, noon to 3 p.m. Sunday, June 21, at the Waterman Center on the campus of Schoolcraft College, 18600



Haggerty, Livonia. Tickets \$22.50 per person, includes brunch and music by The Matt Michael's Trio with special guests George Benson, sax, and Johnny Trudell, trumpet. Proceeds to raise money for the

Featured soloist: George Benson, saxophone, will perform with Johnny Trudell, trumpet, and other guest artists at the Father's Day Brunch at Schoolcraft College on June 21.

admission free Michigan Jazz Festival on Sunday, July 19 at the Golfstar Inn in Farmington Hills, and Schoolcraft's Gourmet Club. Call (248) 474-2720 or (248) 437-9468 for reservations/Information by Friday, June 12.

MENU SPECIALS / CHANGES

OAKLAND GRILL Has a new summertime menu at both lunch and dinner. Executive Chef Louai Sharbas has created a warm-weather-accented menu emphasizing Caribbean and Floridian food creations with a light infusion Pacific Rim cuisine. Prices are cooled down too. At lunch most sandwiches are under \$7 and entrees are under \$9. At dinner, entrees average \$15.50. The restaurant is at 32323 Woodward Ave., Royal Oak.

EAST SIDE MARIO'S Celebrates Garlic - with their third annual Garlic Jamoree through Sunday, May 31. A variety of special menu items that incorporate the flavor of garlic. For starters, try Bruschetta, Calabrese Potato Pie, Calamari al

Diavolo and Garlic Cheese Bread.

Appetizer prices range from \$3.99 to \$6.99. Garlic specialty items include: Bacon-wrapped Garlic Shrimp, Scampi, Baked Sausage Gondola, Garlic-Peppered Sirlion Tri-Trip-Steak, Italian-Style Rotisserie Chicken and Herb Garlic Chicken Fettuccine. Garlic enhanced entrees start at \$7.99. East Side Mario's metro Detroit locations are 2273 Crooks Road (at the northeast corner of M-59) Rochester Hills, nd 29267 Southfield Road (between 12 and 13 Mile Roads) in the Southfield Commons Shopping Center, Southfield, (248) 569-9454.

FRIDAY DINNER SPECIAL FISH & CHIPS - All You Can Eat - \$5.50. Includes side salad, fries, a garlic and herb bread, cut fish. Farmington Hills Beef House and Family Restaurant (481) 477-5845 29223 Grand River and Calumet & Barry

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

Mr. Z's STEAK-HOUSE 537-5600. RED WING RAFFLE During Every RED WING PLAYOFF GAME!!! CCM RED WING JERSEY! Your choice of Home or Away Jersey PLUS Your Favorite Players Name On It! Must be 21 years old and present to win. Call for Details.

Mexican Gardens II FAMILY RESTAURANT. Come Feast on Farmington Hills Finest Authentic Mexican Food! Buy 1 dinner and receive 1/2 off a 2nd dinner of equal or lesser value. 36600 GRAND RIVER AVE. between Highland & Grand River, FARMINGTON HILLS (248) 474-8417 CARRY OUT AVAILABLE

DON PEDRO'S AUTHENTIC MEXICAN CUISINE. 24366 Grand River (3 blocks W. of Telegraph) CARRY OUT (734) 537-1450. MARGHERITA \$1.25. BANQUET FACILITIES. \$7.95 Home Of The Best Mexican / Mexican Banquet Buffet. \$3.79 LUNCH SPECIALS. 1/2 OFF DINNER. Buy 1 dinner, 2nd meal of equal or lesser value 1/2 price.

PRIME RIB DINNER \$12.95. EARLY BIRD DINNERS - \$5.95. MICH HOUSEY'S. OPEN SUNDAY AT 4:00 PM. COCKTAIL MONSIEUR. FASHION SHOW. BUNNY BUSINESSMEN'S LUNCHEONS. DINNER \$6.95.

Cafe Venezia Italian Specialties. Serving Beer, Wine & Cocktails. Dinner 2 \$19.99 For Sunday thru Thursday. Includes: Glass of House Wine, Soup or Salad, Entree, Bread Basket, Dessert. Hours: M-Th: 11 am - 10 pm, FR: 11 am - 11 pm, SAT: 5 - 11 pm, SUN: 4 - 9 pm. 2593B Middlebelt Rd. (at 11 Mile Rd.) (248) 476-1750.