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Who says you can have it your way?

Here's something I learned recently that really bugs me. I'm sharing it with you to see what you think of it. Let it serve as a friendly warning.

My 8-year-old daughter and I were walking through a mall one day last week when we came upon a Burger King. She asked if we could eat there and since it was lunch time and since she had been very good while I shopped, I said, "Sure, why not?"

When I got to the counter, I began placing our order.

"I'd like a kid's meal with chicken strips, french fries, barbecue sauce and milk to drink for her, and I'll have..."

The teen-age cashier stopped me mid-sentence. "I'll have to charge you extra for the milk," she said.

"Excuse me?" I asked.

"I'll have to charge you the full \$2.69 for the Kids Club Meal, even though you're not getting the soft drink that comes with it," she said, "and on top of that, I'll have to charge you 89 cents for the milk, because our kids' meals don't come with milk. They come with a soft drink."

"I've never heard of that before," I told her. "I've ordered kid's meals at other Burger Kings and they've never charged me extra for milk."

"Well they should have," she said. "That's how we're supposed to do it. That's the way I was trained. Milk is more expensive than a kid's size soft drink and there are no substitutions with our kids' meals, so I'll have to charge you 89 cents more."

To make a long story short, I left. But my daughter still wanted her kid's meal, so I drove to another Burger King nearby. That restaurant did charge me extra for milk, but only four cents extra.

So which restaurant was wrong and why were they charging extra for a kid's meal with milk anyway? I mean, aren't kids supposed to be drinking milk?

I called the media relations department at Burger King's national headquarters in Miami, Fla., to see what gives.

Kim Miller, a spokeswoman for the company, said milk is more expensive to provide than child-size soft drinks, partly due to storage costs, and that if a franchisee wants to pass some or all of that extra cost on to consumers it can.

"We can't dictate pricing to our franchisees because it's against the law, due to anti-trust reasons," she said.

"OK," I said, "but if a restaurant is going to charge extra for a kid's meal with milk, shouldn't it post something to that effect on the menu?"

"We want to be honest with our customers, but there are limitations to what you can fit on a menu and the majority of kids' meals are ordered with a soft drink," she said.

She added, "Many people view coming to Burger King as a special treat for their children and just give their children whatever they want, which is usually a soft drink."

Curious, I called McDonald's headquarters in Oak Brook, Ill., to find out what its policy is.

Julie Cleary, a spokeswoman for the company, said franchise owners can charge extra for a Happy Meal with milk if they want. But most don't and a small increase — say five or 10 cents more, she said. She added that the most popular Happy Meal drink isn't a soda, but Hi-C punch fortified with calcium.

I wanted to find out what Wendy's policy was, too, but the spokeswoman who handles its children's meals did not return my messages.

So the bottom line is: You can have it your way at Burger King, but it may cost you extra; at McDonald's, you may or may not get a break today and at Wendy's, well, who knows.

All I know is that the hamburger chains spend so much money advertising their little toys in an effort to lure children in, that the least they can do is offer milk, at no extra charge, to kids like my daughter who enjoy drinking it.

SHOPPING CENTERED



DONNA MULCAHY

Romance reigns at Tiffany Bridal Show



BY LINDA BACHRACK

PHOTOS BY HARRY VITANIS



Elements of bliss: The Tiffany Bridal Show at The Townsend Hotel brimmed with ideas for the bride-to-be, including festive food, wedding cakes from the Townsend Bakery and crystal candlesticks from Tiffany & Co.

When Tiffany & Co. and The Townsend Hotel team up to throw a party, you can bet it will be an elegant affair. Last Sunday, an snow covered the sidewalks of Birmingham, brides-to-be and their guests gathered in The Townsend's opulent ballroom for the second annual Tiffany Bridal Show and brunch.

Tables were draped in cloths of satin, linen and lace, each one an individual work of art. And centerpieces, designed by Marley's, ranged from mounds of roses to silver candelabras filled with baby's breath. As guests sipped mimosa and noshed on pre-brunch canapés, they browsed Tiffany's display tables that offered a selection of sterling silver flatware, china, crystal, wedding rings, invitations and gifts for the wedding party. Popular bridesmaid and groomsman gifts included sterling silver money clips, miniature silver picture frames, sterling cigar cutters and the signature Elsa Peretti bean-shaped lighter.

Pianist Kurt Kunzart provided the musical accompaniment to informal modeling of designer bridal gowns from Alvin's Bride in Birmingham. Collections represented included Amante, Couture Bridal, House of Givenchy, The Diamond Collection, Lazaro and Priscilla of Boston.

"The dresses are beautiful, the calories don't count and the jewels shine," said hostess Lonnie Kanode, of Tiffany & Co., as she welcomed brides-to-be and an smattering of future grooms. She urged guests to try all of the brunch food and to sample the cakes from the Townsend Bakery.

And what a lavish presentation of food there was. The bountiful fruit table included an array of fresh fruit, tarts and flans, even rum-soaked peaches dipped in chocolate. Long tables groined with brunch foods from eggs Benedict and smoked whitefish to tiny latkes with applesauce and assorted scones and pastries.

Lori Barton, of Waterford, attended the event with her mother Tina and her future mother-in-law Sharon Capitani. Barton will wed Mason Capitani, from Rochester Hills, on June 26. All the crucial decisions have been made for the

said. Her dress, from Alvin's, is a simple, white strapless A-line. Five attendants will wear champagne-hued gowns. The photographer's booked, the flowers selected. All the two real estate brokers need to do is show up and repeat their vows in front of 250 of their closest friends and family.

May 30 is the big day for Lisa Stone, a social worker, and her fiance' Jonah Sigel, a law school student from Toronto. The two have been engaged since last April when Lisa visited Jonah at the University of Miami and he popped the question at a local currywut. Little did she know that the four people in the restaurant who were holding magazines in front of their faces were actually her mom, her aunt, her sister and her brother-in-law. "I was stunned," said Stone.

Stone's dress also came from Alvin's. It's a white, off-shoulder style with no beading or embellishment. "I must have looked at 100 dresses, everywhere from Chicago to New York and Toronto, and the one I finally chose was one of the first I tried on," she said. Stone will have nine attendants at her Shaanrey Zedek synagogue ceremony. She's still looking for a kosher baker.

For Jamie Kohen, a teacher in West Bloomfield, the wedding gown dilemma was "no problem." She cut out a picture of a dress from a magazine, found it at Alvin's and it was love at first sight. "It's very simple," said Kohen. "No beads, no lace. It's fitted and has a long train." Kohen will marry Howie Blank, a medical school student from Maryland, in July at Wabook Country Club. Her four bridesmaids will wear black dresses that "can be worn again." Home Bakery in Rochester will create the chocolate chip with chocolate ganache wedding cake.

All of the young brides-to-be gathered tips and ideas from the Tiffany Bridal Show. From centerpieces to cake, and diamonds to honeymoon suites, the gala provided a sensual afternoon escape into the world of romance.



Wedding album: (clockwise from top left) Models wear designer gowns from Alvin's Bride in Birmingham; Matthew Kemper and Heidi Koenig, of Birmingham, will wed on Dec. 18; bride-to-be Lori Barton is flanked by her future mother-in-law Sharon Capitani and her mom Tina Barton; a floral centerpiece from Marley's in Birmingham; Farmington Hills residents Susan Hathe and Jon Phillips will wed at The Townsend Hotel on Sept. 11.

News of special events for shoppers is included in this calendar. Send information to: Malls & Main Streets, c/o Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 East Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009; or fax (248) 644-1314. Deadline: Wednesday 5 p.m. for publication on Sunday.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 15

ECO-TRAVEL
Borders Farmington Hills presents Travel Beyond Borders. This month's travel discussion group talks about Costa Rica and such activities as eco-tours and rain forest hiking. 7:30 p.m. 30995 Orchard Lake Road.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17

WOK COOKING
Celebrate the Chinese New Year with Elizabeth King, author of *A Wok a Week: 62 Light & Easy Chinese Recipes*. Also, enjoy some delicious appetizers

ADDED ATTRACTIONS

featured in the book. 7:30 p.m. Borders Books & Music, 34300 Woodward, Birmingham.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18

CLASSIC RENEFREW
Rez & Sherm presents the spring/summer trunk show of designer Renefrew. Today through Saturday, Feb. 20, 6536 Telegraph Road, Bloomfield Hills.

FASHION FACTS
Fashion Group International of Detroit sponsors a day-long Career Conference for students seeking careers in fashion. The conference features small group seminars led by professionals in areas of the fashion industry including clothing design, jewelry, home interiors, cosmetics, customer service, promotion and store management. Students will have the

opportunity to be interviewed by personnel from Nordstrom, Saks Fifth Avenue, Kmart Corp., Estate Launder and other companies. \$25 includes lunch. 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Northfield Hilton, 5500 Crooks Rd., Troy. (313) 577-3318.

BRIDAL GOWNS

Alvin's Bride presents The Illusa Collection of designer gowns. A representative will be present to assist you during this special preview. Call for an appointment, (248) 644-7200, ext. 24. Today through Sat., Feb. 20, 249 Pierce St., Birmingham.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21

STYLE AND STONES

Hudson's Oakland Mall store presents a Tommy Hilfiger Fashion Show featuring sportswear for men and women. Win a pair of tickets to the Rolling Stones "No Security Tour" Detroit show. 2 p.m. Mall entrance.