

DINING

Matt Prentice has hand in 'Unique' deli at casino

BY KEELY WYOGNIK

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For the past three months Matt Prentice has been totally focused on Deli Unique, a New York style deli inside the new MotorCity Casino in Detroit.

He's not running the restaurant, but it's his baby. Prentice, president of the Unique Restaurant Corporation, licensed the name "Deli Unique" to the casino, and will serve as its consultant on design, menu selection, restaurant operation, hiring and training staff.

"I'm excited to be part of this," said Prentice during a press conference on Aug. 10 at casino headquarters in downtown Detroit. "They asked us to create something different, fun, entertaining, bigger than life. It will be a cafeteria-style deli, and bakers will entertain guests waiting in line. It will be very New Yorkish."

Theatrical types, comedians, and even housewives who enjoy the thought of getting paid to pick on people are auditioning today, and tomorrow for one of

seven full-time baker positions at the restaurant. Each baker will earn \$10 an hour to start with a built-in salary increase after six months. If you're interested in auditioning, call Dave Mitchell (248) 646-0370, Ext. 213.

Chuck Ajlouny, managing partner of URC's Plaza Deli in Southfield, is Deli Unique's baker prototype, and will be training the bakers. Born and raised in Detroit, he developed his "bark" while living in Brooklyn, New York.

"I take orders, talk to you, I insult you, call your sandwiches. It spices things up," said Ajlouny. "We have fun at lunch time, it keeps it lively. You have to be quick-witted, smart, and have a strong voice. We tried to get Pavlovski, but he wasn't available."

During the press conference he gave reporters a taste of his bark. "Are you guys ready or what," he asked. "Everyone gather round, I got a restaurant to run."

The 20 different sandwiches with names like "It's No Gam-

ble," "Jackpot," and "Lox of Luck," range from 6 ounces to 20 ounces. Pay a \$1 more to double the meat for deli size sandwich.

Big Eight "a deli fresser" is an "obnoxiously large sandwich"—20 ounces of meat, including corned beef, pastrami, brisket, turkey and salami, served on an onion roll with 3 ounces Swiss cheese, 4 ounces coleslaw, and Russian dressing. Hearty soups and main dish salads will also be served. Desserts, created especially for "larger than life," include a five layer chocolate mousse cake.

"The deli will have over 200 seats, and be designed to feed a lot of people fast. It will offer the best quality sandwiches served on hot, out of the oven bread," said Prentice.

MotorCity Casino approached Prentice with the restaurant concept. "We think it's a tremendous opportunity for our company," he said. "It will help our reputation not only locally, but nationally."

"The name association lends credibility to whatever we have to offer," said Lane W. Maxey,

director of food and beverage for the casino.

"Matt Prentice has built a reputation for world-class food service and has a fantastic local track record," said Jack Barthwell, director of public relations for the casino.

Scheduled to open sometime this fall, the temporary MotorCity Casino will cover approximately 12 acres around the former Wonder Bread Bakery at Grand River and the Lodge Freeway. The casino, owned by Detroit Entertainment, L.L.C. (a joint venture of Detroit-based Atwater Casino Group and Las Vegas-based Mandalay Resort Group) will have two live entertainment venues, two main floors of gaming, a third floor non-smoking gaming area, and four floor high-limit area.

Deli Unique, along with a fine dining restaurant, buffet and Middle Eastern restaurant will be in the former Continental Bakery building attached to the main gaming building by two skywalks.

If you want a taste of what the new Deli Unique will be like,



STAFF PHOTO BY JIM JACOBSON

Number one baker: Chuck Ajlouny, managing partner of URC's Plaza Deli in Southfield, presents the Plaza Special, corned beef, cole slaw, Swiss cheese and Russian dressing on rye. Ajlouny keeps people laughing at lunch, and will train bakers at the MotorCity Casino.

visit Ajlouny during lunch at Highway, corner of 12 Mile Road, Plaza Deli, 29146 Northwestern Southfield, (248) 356-2310.

WHAT'S COOKING

BY ELEANOR HEALD
SPECIAL WRITER

■ **Smitty's Grill**, 222 Main Street (between Second and Third), Rochester (248) 652-1600 has posted new hours for the month of August. For this month, Smitty's is closed Sunday and Monday, but open for dinner only 6-10 p.m. Tuesday-Thursday and 5-11 p.m. Friday-Saturday for its signature wood-roasted meats and large selection of contemporary dishes Americans like to eat. Fun kid's menu here, too.

■ After a nationwide search Matt Prentice and his Unique Restaurant Corporation has been chosen as the official caterer for West Bloomfield's Jewish Community Center of Metropolitan Detroit. Catering will be kosher and dairy with the Orthodox rabbi of metro-Detroit providing a full-time on-site kosher

supervisor. This news coincides with JCC's renovation plans to include 20,000 square feet dedicated to food service up and running in Handelman Hall in spring 2000. URC will also open Milk and Honey, a full-service dairy restaurant including a sushi bar, stir-fry meals, wok station and exhibition kitchen. All items will be available as carry-out. Dairy products will be Chai, Israeli. For clients requesting that meat be served at an event, Prentice will partner with a local kosher caterer.

■ **Too Chez**, 2715 Sheraton Drive, Novi (248) 348-5555 will offer customers ordering lunch or dinner all bottles of wine served during the meal at 25 percent discount Monday through Thursday from now through Nov. 15.

By-the-glass wines are not included in the promotion. For wine lovers, this is an opportu-

ty to learn more about pairing wine with food. Executive Chef Greg Upshur and Maitre d'Dining Room Manager Achille Bianchi say they are at the ready to make food recommendations matching discounted wines selected by diners.

■ **Titanic Dinner at Duet** 3663 Woodward Ave. at Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Detroit, (313) 831-3538, Thursday, Sept. 9, \$125 per person plus tax and gratuity is a complete entertainment package, including a before-the-show feast featuring authentic recipes prepared on the infamous ship, tickets to see the stage version of "Titanic" at the Fisher Theater plus transportation to and from the Fisher. A wine package specially selected by URC Wine Director and Master Sommelier Madeline Triffon will be available at additional cost. Recipes for the four-course feast are from the "Last

Dinner on The Titanic" cookbook by Rich Archbold and Dana McCauley and bearing the signature flair of URC Corporate Chef Jim Barnett. Due to ticketing, reservations must be secured with a credit card.

■ **The Golden Mushroom** 18100 West 10 Mile Road, Southfield (248) 559-4230 encourages DSO support. It's apparent that owner Field Ashton knows that fine food and wine pair well with fine music! Through March 2000, if you dine at The Golden Mushroom before a Detroit Symphony Orchestra performance, you can get a 10 percent reduction off your total bill. Simply show tickets to your server. When phoning to make a reservation, tell the person you speak with that you're going to the symphony. Your meal will be paced so that you can enjoy it and arrive on time at Orchestra

Hall for the performance. Mark your calendar! The Ducks Unlimited fund-raiser is 6 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 23. The cost is \$55 per person for a series of passed hors d'oeuvres with wine followed by a five-course dinner, three courses with wine. Duck's Unlimited is a world-wide conservation organization dedicated to improving wetlands and duck habitats. This early autumn game-style dinner will undoubtedly sell out, so I'm telling you about it in advance! Call the Golden Mushroom for reservations/information.

■ **Chef Lorraine Platman**, owner of the popular Sweet Lorraine's restaurants in Southfield (29101 Greenfield Road) and Ann Arbor (303 Detroit Street), will open a third Sweet Lorraine's in the Livonia Marriott Hotel, Laurel Park Place. Target

opening is January 1, 2000.

The Marriott Sweet Lorraine's will occupy the space of the former Alie's American Grill and will be the only restaurant in the hotel. Breakfast, lunch and dinner will be served.

Gary Sussman, Platman's husband and business partner, noted that the menu will feature the "melting pot cuisine" for which Lorraine has become famous. However, diners can anticipate that just as the Southfield and Ann Arbor locations each have unique menus, so will the third site.

"We expect that because we'll be in a hotel catering to well-traveled business clientele, we can reach out for some new tastes," Sussman said. "Lorraine is working on the menu now, even though we're several months from opening. If we get lucky, debut will be before Christmas."

EATING OUT IN THE SUBURBS

Just in case you missed it, here are some of the restaurants we've recently featured on the Dining Page.

■ **Orchid Cafe** — 3303 Rochester Road (in Troy Point Plaza), Troy (248) 524-1944 and 66 Square Lake Road (in the Troy Corner Plaza, Troy (248) 828-4149. Open: Lunch 11 a.m.

to 3 p.m., Monday-Friday; noon to 3 p.m. Saturday; 3-9:30 p.m. Monday-Saturday, dinner. Menu: Traditional Thai dishes. Broader selections of dinner than lunch. Meatless dishes abound and vegan preferences can be accommodated. Cost: Lunch \$6.75-\$8; dinner \$9.50-\$11.50. Reservations: Accepted. Credit cards: All

major accepted. No liquor license.

■ **Andiamo Osteria** — 129 S. Main Street (corner of Second Street), Royal Oak (248) 682-9300. Open: Lunch 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday; Dinner 4-11 p.m. Monday-Thursday, and until midnight Friday and Saturday.

■ **Eclectic array of authentic Italian dishes** from antipasti through desserts. Housemade pasta. Cost: Lunch entrees \$5.95-\$16.95; Dinner entrees \$12-21. Reservations: Accepted, but only for four or more on Friday and Saturday. Credit cards: All majors accepted.

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