

Cleveland's Gill & Grill offers familiar ambience

By **RANKE BROGLIND**
STAFF WRITER
rlbroglind@aol.com

Cleveland's Gill & Grill, one of downtown Ann Arbor's newest eateries, promises to be a favorite for those who like fresh, well-presented seafood dishes, as well as tasty meat, chicken and pasta entrees.

While the emphasis is on fresh fish — there's always a list of daily specials — Cleveland's serves a wonderful sautéed pork loin in a molasses citrus glaze with sun-dried cherries (\$13.95 for dinner, \$8.95 for lunch). The dish, created by Chef Michael Dopkowski, developed quite a following at John Cleveland's former restaurant in Plymouth Township, The Water Club Grill.

"It sells even better in Ann Arbor," said Cleveland. The London broil (\$13.95), served on a bed of oven-roasted potatoes, onions and sweet peppers, is another satisfying meat-eater's choice for cold, fall evening. So is the filet mignon (\$18.25), nestled in a fried onion basket and lightly covered with a Crimini mushroom sauce.

The filet is good, said Cleveland, very good. Thank goodness Cleveland has transferred most of the Water Club's menu to his new place, including the creamy, rosy-hued Palomino clam chowder and the Maryland crab cakes with a roasted red pepper sauce. If my taste buds remember correctly,

Cleveland's Gill & Grill
Where: 311 S. Main Street, Ann Arbor (directly across from The Ark), (734) 213-2505
Open: 11:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 11:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday; noon to 11 p.m. Saturday; 3-9 p.m. Sunday.
Menu: Lots of seafood, a good selection of steaks, just enough chicken and pasta entrees. Homemade pumpkin pie.
Cost: Moderate to moderately high, lunches range from \$5 to \$10; dinners \$9-\$17. Most dinner items are in the \$11 to \$15 range.
Atmosphere: Comfortably bistrot, with nautical themes.
Mostly non-smoking. Smoking section on second floor.
Credit cards: All major credit cards accepted
Reservations: Recommended for parties over five. Diners may call ahead one hour for a table.

these crabcakes should be worth the drive to Ann Arbor.

"I liked the menu we had. I thought it was a well-balanced menu. I thought it would transition well to Ann Arbor. We've offered more appetizers to encourage grazing. People can come over before and after performances at The Ark and have appetizers and a glass of wine," said Cleveland.

Appetizers include shrimp cocktail, steamed mussels, crab cakes, several kinds of oysters, baked fish, sautéed wild mushrooms, and sautéed spicy black bean cake. Prices range from \$4.95 to \$7.95.

The black bean cakes are big sellers, as is the baked brie, said Cleveland. "In one month here we'll sell as many baked bries as we sold in three months in Plymouth."

Cleveland's wife, Sarah, has

added a specialty to the menu: Her homemade pumpkin pie. "It has more spices. It's hardy, interesting pumpkin pie. We sell out every weekend," said Cleveland.

Ambience also is part of Cleveland's new place. The building, which dates to 1901, has been reincarnated several times, mostly as a bar. It retains much of its comfortable turn-of-the-century look, with half-paneled walls and original tin ceilings. And both floors — yes, this is a two-story restaurant — have their own vintage, wood bars.

The well-worn oak bar in the restaurant's main, street-level dining room comes from Ironwood, Mich. Cleveland believes it was constructed about 1900. It certainly bears testimony to a century of use.

"There are literally thousands of elbow marks rubbed into it," said Cleveland.



At your service: John Cleveland (left) presents Maryland crab cakes, and Chef Michael Dopkowski, black bean cakes, a popular appetizer, at Cleveland's Gill & Grill in Ann Arbor.

However, Cleveland has added enough contemporary touches — like the sweeping nautical-theme murals — to give his new place its own 90s-nostalgic, nicely hip personality. He calls it a "recycled ambience."

The personable Cleveland is a hometown boy. He grew up in

Ann Arbor and knows many of its merchants and business owners. He was the general manager of the Gandy Dancer from 1989-1992 and the assistant manager from 1977-81.

He likes to stop by tables and ask his guests about their meals.

He wants them to walk out the door having had a truly satisfying dining experience.

"I want them to feel like it was a comfortable place, an interesting place. Like they have been here before."

WHAT'S COOKING

Send items for consideration in *What's Cooking* to Keely Wygonik, Entertainment Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150. To fax, (734) 591-7279 or e-mail kuygonik@oc.homecom.net

Buddy's Restaurant & Pizzeria — kicks off "got pizza?" 5:30-8:30 p.m. Tuesday, Nov. 16, at its Farmington Hills location 31646 Northwestern Highway, Farmington Hills to benefit the

St. Vincent & Sarah Fisher Center, WDIV-TV Anchorwoman Carmen Harlan, the first "got pizza?" celebrity sporting a red pizza sauce mustache, will be live at this Buddy's around 7 p.m. But the first 100 big and little kids will have the chance to create their own "got pizza?" mustache and have their photo taken and printed on a souvenir Buddy's tee-shirt. From the 16th through the end of November, visit any Buddy's and order the

Carmen Harlan Signature Pizza (includes cheese, bacon, ham sausage, green peppers and onions) and \$2 will go towards the St. Vincent & Sarah Fisher Center. In the coming months, other local celebrities will get their mustache and signature pizza with \$2 going to their favorite children's charity.

The Lark — Florida Stone Crab & Lobster Dinner, 7 p.m. Monday or Tuesday, Nov. 22-23. The cost is \$90 per person.

upscale casual Florida attire encouraged. The Lark is at 6430 Farmington Road, West Bloomfield. Call (248) 661-4469 for reservations.

Levelette Beaujolais Nouveau — at Big Rock Chop & Brew House 245 S. Eton, Birmingham (248) 647-7774. Between now and Nov. 20 beginning at 4 p.m. daily, enjoy a four-course very French Bistrot din-

ner. Each course accompanied by wine. The cost is \$68 per person. Until Nov. 18, the legal first date the 1999 Georges Dubouff Beaujolais Nouveau can be poured, the substitution is the lovely 1998 Maison Louis Jadot Beaujolais Village. Entree choices include Supreme de Volaille (breast of chicken) or Petite Filet Mignon aux Duxelle (small grilled filet stuffed with diced mushrooms) and served with a

shallot and balsamic vinegar reduction.

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