

# You can 'surf 'n turf' at City Limits Grille

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The mushroom appetizer was just what I needed on the cold, overcast winter afternoon I visited the City Limits Grille on Ann Arbor Road in Plymouth Township.

It was a huge Portobello stuffed with shrimp, crab and mozzarella. It came nestled in the just right amount of creamy lobster sauce and was baked to perfection. If they serve food in heaven, it's going to be that stuffed mushroom.

"On a Friday or Saturday night, we'll sell 50 or 60 of those," said owner Al Balooley.

City Limits Grille, which opened in September, occupies the premises of the former Water Club Grill. Balooley has not changed the interior — although he has plans to do so — but his menu offers more grilled meat items than the previous owner's. There's lots of old-fashioned surf 'n turf combinations, like the steak and lobster dinner at \$17.95.

While Balooley wants to add a few more seafood selections, his menu already includes stuffed white fish, broiled walleye, sautéed perch, lobster tails and crab legs. "We're selling so many lobster tails it's unbelievable," he said.

If you're a lamb chop lover,

**City Limits Grille**  
Where: 39500 Ann Arbor Road, Plymouth Township, (734) 454-0666  
Open: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday; 4-11 p.m. Saturday; Noon to 8 p.m. Sunday.  
Menu: A variety of American fare, including grilled meats, seafood and surf 'n turf. Some chicken and pasta. Appetizers, salads and hearty lunchroom sandwiches. Great French onion soup au gratin.  
Cost: Lunch, sandwiches and entrees, \$6.95-\$12.95; dinner, \$9.95-\$17.95. All major credit cards accepted.  
Atmosphere: Comfortable for after-work dining. Low lighting adds to privacy. Separate combination bar and dining area.  
Extras: Two large downstairs banquet rooms. Carryouts available.  
Reservations: Recommended on weekends.

you're in luck. Balooley features them for both lunch and dinner. They're a customer favorite, he said. "I didn't think they were that scarce. Being Lebanese, that's all I eat. We use Australian and American lamb. America produces the best lamb and veal in the world."

Another popular item is The City Limits Special, a 12-ounce certified Black Angus sirloin steak. "There's no fat. The flavor is wonderful. It's very tender. You can eat it with a butter knife. It's our best seller," said restaurant manager Dana John.

## Lunch

The lunch menu features lots of hearty sandwiches served in generous portions. The Ruben, a mountain of corned beef with

sauerkraut and Swiss cheese, is stacked high enough to dislodge your Java. You could easily split one with a friend, especially if ordering soup.

Balooley is not new to the restaurant business. He's been at it for 35 years. In the '70s and '80s he owned the once popular Topinka's House and Topinka's on the Boulevard, which was located across from the Fisher Building. Whenever the actor Zero Mostel was appearing at the Fisher Theatre he'd call Balooley for an order of stewed chicken.

"That was the love of my life," said Balooley of his Topinka days. "It was just a good time of my life."

This is also a good time for Balooley. His restaurant is well-located and usually filled on the



STAFF PHOTO BY PAUL HIRSCHMANN

**Great chops:** Chef Troy Barnes (right), and owner Al Balooley present one of City Limit Grille's most popular dishes, grilled lamb chops.

weekends. He's looking to add a new chef, one who isn't a "prime donna." Customers need to be served exactly what they want and how they want it, he said.

He's busy about what goes on in his kitchen, especially when it

comes to the house salad dressing, which is made from a beloved family recipe. One person makes the dressing but Balooley, not even his nephew who is one of his chefs, "I won't let anybody have the recipe. I make at least

25 gallons every week to 10 days."

Balooley's fussiness is paying off. The food is delicious, the service good and, most of all, the customers are happy.

## WHAT'S COOKING

**Send dinner specials, menu changes, restaurant renovations, and other items for consideration in "What's Cooking" to Kelly Wyznowski, Assistant Managing Editor, Features Group, Observer Newsroom, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150. To fax, (734) 591-7279 or e-mail [kwyznowski@comcast.net](mailto:kwyznowski@comcast.net). Let us know about your Chinese New Year**

and Valentine's Day dinners. This week's items contributed by Eleanor Heald, special writer.

**■ Five Lakes Grill — 424 North Main St., Milford, (248) 684-7456. Food & Wine of Spain Dinner, 8:45 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 25, \$45 per person plus tax and gratuity.**

To excite your taste buds, chef-owner Brian Polcyn will

begin the evening with tapas-style appetizers followed by a six-course dinner. Sommelier Ron Edwards has prepared wine matches with each course.

**■ Fox Lair Dinner Theatre — Presents "Murder at the Johnson's," a hilarious comedy opening Saturday, Jan. 22, Saturday nights only, 6 p.m.**

cocktails, 7 p.m. dinner (show follows), at Fox Hills Golf Club, 8768 N. Territorial Road, Plymouth. \$29.95, call (734) 453-7272.

**■ Valentine's Day Dinner Dance — Saturday, Feb. 12, Waterman Center at Schoolcraft in Livonia. The evening begins 7 p.m. with dinner — tomato bisque, salad, rock Cor-**

nish game hen, twice baked sweet potato and asparagus, and Bavarian apple cheesecake for dessert. Then dance the night

away to the music of Johnny Trudell. Tickets are \$37.50 per person, call (734) 462-4417 for reservations.

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*-The Times (London)*

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