

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 Portabella 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 60 or 60 of those," said owner Al Balooey.

City Limits Grille, which opened in September, occupies the premises of the former Water Club Grill. Balooey 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 Balooey 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 luncheon 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. Balooey 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 Johnson.

Lunch

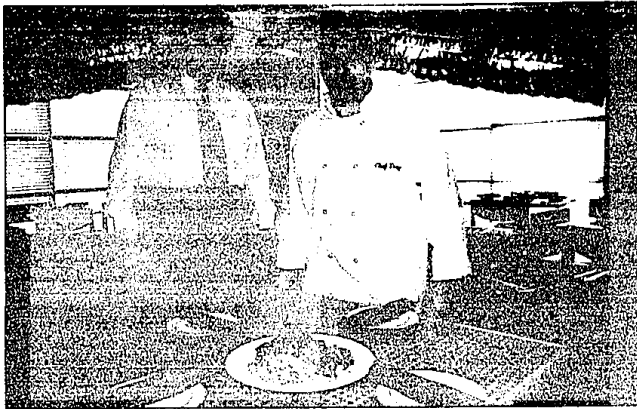
The lunch menu features lots of hearty sandwiches served in generous portions. The ruben, a mountain of corned beef with

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

Balooey 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 Country 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 called Balooey for an order of stewed chicken.

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

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



STAFF PHOTO BY PAUL HERNIMANN

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

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

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

comes to the house salad dressing, which is made from a beloved family recipe. No one makes the dressing but Balooey, 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."

Balooey'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 Wygnih, Assistant Managing Editor Features Group, Observer Newspapers, 30251 Schoolcraft Livonia, MI 48150. To fax: (734) 971-7279 or e-mail: kwygnih@home.com.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, 6:45 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 Howard 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 College 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 Barvarian 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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