

Two new restaurants open at the Star Southfield

BY ELEANOR HEALD

SPECIAL WRITER

On Jan. 7, the Star Southfield's 20-screen megaplex, with its stadium seating in rocking chairs and SDDS digital sound, also became a "let's eat out" destination.

New York-based Ark Restaurant Corp., aware of the hot metro-Detroit market, saw the opening of its Volcano Grill and Z-Dim eateries as a distinct addition there. New York City, Las Vegas, Washington, D.C., and Boston locations. Founded in 1975, Ark has expanded from operating moderately sized neighborhood restaurants to high-volume, multi-concept eateries. The Southfield project typifies this 21st Century concept.

Director of Operations Donna Palmaro, a transplanted New Yorker who "grew up" with Ark Restaurants, sums it up. "Volcano Grill's menu is similar to our Tex-Mex restaurants in Washington, D.C., and lower Manhattan. We gave this location a different name because it has its own unique space, architecture and colors. Z-Dim is CEO Michael Weinstein's brainchild. The small tastes (tapas) concept is a hot food movement."

Corporate Executive Chef Michael Kierman adds: "For our Mexican-style dishes, we use only thinly sliced beef skirt steak, not ground beef. We roast all our chilis on premise and make our mole and salsas from scratch. The small tastes at Z-Dim are very versatile. Eating can be quick or slow. It allows a large group of friends to linger and offers a family with kids a broad range of choices, so everyone gets what they want."

WHAT'S COOKING

Send dinner specials, menu changes, restaurant renovations, and other items for consideration in What's Cooking to Keely Wygnanik, Assistant Managing Editor, Features Group, Observer News, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150. To fax, (734) 591-7279 or e-mail kwynanik@oe.homecom.net. Let us know about your Chinese New Year and Valentine's Day dinners.

Unique Restaurant Corporation — Concerned about restaurant food and your health? In a move unprecedented in the restaurant industry, the Unique

Volcano Grill & Z-Dim
Where: 25333 W. 12 Mile Road, in the Southfield Entertainment Center.
Volcano Grill (248) 372-0100. Z-Dim (248) 372-0110.
Open: 11:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday; until midnight Tuesday-Thursday; until 1 a.m. Friday; 11 a.m. to 1 a.m. Saturday; and 11 p.m. to 11 p.m. Sunday.
Menu:
■ Volcano Grill — traditional tastes of a Mexican cantina.
■ Z-Dim — broad global, fusion concept of Hong Kong style (cart service) dim sum.
Cost:
■ Volcano Grill — Mexican traditional tastes \$5-10, entrees \$11-18.
■ Z-Dim — dim sum \$3-7, entrees \$8-13.
Reservations: Accepted.
Credit cards: All major.
Details: Kids menus. Take-out. Full service bar at Volcano; wine and beer at Z-Dim. Brunch Saturday and Sunday. Banquets for groups of 10 to 1,000. Vegetarian sensitive.

Originally from Puebla, Mexico and now a Southfield resident with his wife and three children, Executive Chef Carlos Garcia Rios oversees the kitchen for both eateries. To take the position, he re-located from New York City along with the kitchen crew.

Theatergoers passing through the colossal entry to Volcano Grill get not only their fill of Mexican food but \$3.50 million worth of eye candy and drama is screaming colors. You can order Margaritas by the Yard with chips and guacamole, quesadillas, fajitas, burritos and other cantina fare.

Interesting entrees such as Chicken, Beef or Shrimp Alambre, brochettes marinated with garlic and chilies, Cornmeal Crusted Shrimp with pineapple salsa or Yucatan Style Ribs with tamarind barbecue sauce come without the all-too-familiar obligation rice and refried beans. But

take this tip from Rios: "The enchiladas and Shrimp Alambre are my best efforts." A grab and go taco bar suits those with time constraints.

Dim sum

Z-Dim puts a new-age spin on Hong Kong style dim sum, with cart offerings served in a futuristic atmosphere. For the traditional cart service, 10 dim sum selections from a master list of 600 change daily. But they are not all Chinese. Carts are more like circulating tapas bars offering tastes from around the globe. Z-Dim attempts to appeal to a variety of ethnic preferences. So, while you find Peking Duck on the menu, as might be expected from the eatery's Asian name, there's distinctly Italian Angel Hair Pasta with rock shrimp and Middle Eastern Lamb Kebabs.

To some, sensory overload may also be the name of the game at Z-Dim. A series of specially

curated video installations beam continually and the larger-than-life exhibition Kitchen answers so you want to be a chef?

Flan, fried ice cream and banana piñata are Volcano's specialty desserts. Z-Dim carts have a stellar key lime pie and chocolate crème brûlée as top choices.

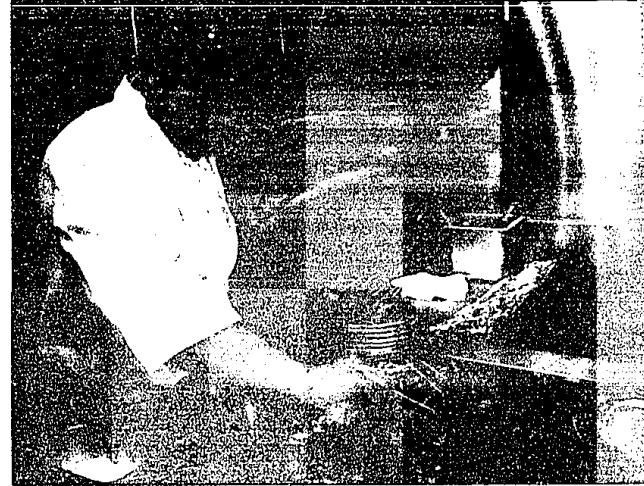
Neither Volcano Grill nor Z-

Spicy snack: Executive chef Carlos Rios prepares beef satay. Rios oversees the kitchens of both new restaurants at the Star Southfield theater complex.

Dim is the place to choose for entertainment. Fat Anthony's will feature two large brick ovens for pizza. Starlight Brewery will offer pub food and six to eight microbrews.

Eleanor Heald writes about dining, food and wine for the Observer & Eccentric. Next week: To leave her voice mail message, dial (734) 953-2047, mailbox 1864.

Spring 2000 will bring two more Ark Restaurant Corporation eateries to the Southfield



STAFF PHOTO BY JIM JACOBSON

Restaurant Corporation began company-wide mandatory vaccinations on Jan. 18 to immunize all food-handler employees from the hepatitis A virus (HAV). In the future, all new food-handler employees will be required to get HAV vaccination as part of their pre-employment drug screen and physical.

Matt Prentice, URC president, made the decision to begin mandatory inoculations, not because of any problems in his restaurants, but out of concern for the safety of his diners and employees. Inoculations of 250 employees will cost the company

more than \$30,000. "We take every precaution to ensure safe food handling," Prentice affirms. "But no matter how clean the restaurant, how well trained or watchful the staff, vaccination is the only guaranteed way to prevent the spread-

ing of hepatitis A. URC has a history of being proactive when it comes to guest and employee safety. This is our insurance."

In the past three years, metro-Detroit has seen two HAV outbreaks and one fatality due to food-handler transmission. In

1998, the number of reported HAV cases in Michigan and Idaho were second in the nation only to Arizona.

URC operates the following restaurants and delis in metro-Detroit: Cafe Jardin and Portabella in the Somerset Collection,

Troy; Deli Unique, Bingham Farms, Bloomfield Hills, Detroit and West Bloomfield; Plaza Deli, Southfield; Morels, Bingham Farms; Flying Fish, Birmingham; No. VI, Novi; Northern Lakes Seafood Company, Bloomfield Hills; and Duet, Detroit.

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All entries must be typed or printed and postmarked no later than Saturday, March 11, 2000.

An entry form must be attached to each recipe. This form may be reproduced. Send to:

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Address _____ City _____

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