

# 'Take-out guy' gets lunch for co-workers

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One of the things I'm known for at the Observer Newspaper office in Livonia is getting lunch. It's not exactly a claim to fame, but I'll take it.

It started simply enough a few years ago when I was going to a fast food restaurant to get something for myself and a couple of people asked me to fetch something for them, too.

Pretty soon I was collecting menus from nearby restaurants and taking orders throughout the newsroom.

My co-workers have come to depend on me to the extent that they sometimes ask me at 9 a.m. where I'm going that day. One particular co-worker often tries to steer me to certain places she prefers and objects strenuously if I go somewhere she hates.

Anyway, it has come to my attention that the things I've learned about getting takeout lunches for two to 10 people five days a week can benefit others. Far be it for me to withhold useful information.

The restaurants and takeout spots I go to are mostly located within a couple miles of the Observer office at Levan and Schoolcraft.

Some of them are once a week stops. Others are once in a while



STAFF PHOTO BY TON TONON

Lunch is here: That's me carrying in lunch for my co-workers at the Observer Newspapers office in Livonia.

stops. Among the former are Mr. Muster's, Little Armando's, China Inn and David's New York Deli.

Mr. Muster's soup is a big favorite in the office. The last time I went there, six people ordered the cream of mushroom. I had 16 orders all together (\$58) and had to enlist a helper to carry it back to the office.

I usually start taking orders at 11:30 a.m., walking around with a menu to show people and a notepad to write on. They pay me on the spot and usually give enough of a "tip" to subsidize my own lunch.

Next I phone the orders in and drive over to pick up the food.

My tendency is to trust the eateries to provide everything

according to my specifications, but I'm constantly reminded this isn't a good long-term policy.

Mr. Muster's once forgot two whole rollup sandwiches. Little Armando's has twice filled an order for two beef enchiladas with one beef and one chicken enchilada. Senate Coney Island gave me five Greek salads without dressing.

Only Steve Shaunessey of Mr. Muster's has offered to deliver the food he forgot to provide initially. That's why we chose to feature his restaurant in our first column.

It's nice to break bread with a group of co-workers and probably helps build a spirit of camaraderie on the staff.

I can guarantee that few of us would eat lunch together otherwise.

I enjoy getting lunch for everyone but am constantly reminded that I'm unusual that way. No one ever offers to do the job in my stead, which is fine but illustrates how onerous they consider the job to be.

Ralph Echinaw welcomes your comments and/or questions about take-out lunches and dinners. Call him at (734) 953-2064. Write him at 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150. E-mail him at rechtinaw@ec.homecomm.net.

## Mr. Muster's

Where: 37665 Five Mile Road, southwest corner of Five Mile Road and Newburgh, Livonia, (734) 464-3939, fax: (734) 464-7363

Open: 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday; 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday.

Menu: Roll-up sandwiches, some hot sandwiches such as burgers and grilled chicken breast, broasted chicken, ribs, and salads.

What you won't find on the menu: Homemade soup. Ask what the soup of the day is. It changes daily.

Average lunch price: \$5

Credit cards accepted: American Express, Discover, Visa, MasterCard

Catering: Sandwich trays, lunches, picnics, and barbecues. Lunch for office menu available.



STAFF PHOTO BY MATTHEW TAPLIN/EX

At your service: Steve Shaunessey of Mr. Muster's presents a tray of broasted chicken, barbecue baby back ribs, potato wedges and garlic sticks.

## VALENTINE'S DAY DINNER DESTINATIONS

We've spared no expense (yours) to find the most romantic, fine-dining spots in town to wine and woo your favorite Valentine. If the atmosphere doesn't seduce you, the food will. All you have to do is make reservations quicker than a heartbeat. List compiled by staff writer Renée Skoglund

■ **Cafe Bon Homme** - 844 Penniman, Plymouth, (734) 463-6260. Cost: Four-course prefixed dinner, \$46 per person. Dinner hour: Begins 6 p.m. (last reservation 9 p.m.) Owner Greg Goodman promises to "pull out all the stops" for Valentine couples dining in his comfortably

elegant little restaurant, which he describes as a "chic, upscale, Left Bank bistro."

■ **Cafe Cortina**, 30716, W. 10 Mile, Farmington Hills, (248) 474-9033. Cost: About \$100, excluding wine. Dinner hour: Begins 6 p.m. Good cooking is like love, simple yet divine, said Adrian Tonon, who co-owns the restaurant with his mother, Rina.

Since 1976, lovers have wined and dined at Cafe Cortina, especially in the fireplace room. "It's very cozy, warm and welcoming. There's something in the air that's so romantic," says Tonon.

■ **Emily's** - 506 N. Center, Northville, (248) 349-0505. Cost: Appetizers, \$7-\$18; dinners, \$19-\$35. Dinner hour: Begins 5:30 p.m. Small and intimate, Emily's is in a Victorian-style house. There's room for just 60 diners, some of whom will be lucky enough to sit by the fireplace.

■ **La Bistecca Italian Grille** - 39405 Plymouth Road, Livonia, (734) 264-0400. Cost: About \$100 for two, excluding wine. Dinner hour: Begins 6 p.m. The atmosphere is really conducive to a special evening because of the food and our

extreme attention to detail and service," said owner Jerry Costanza. La Bistecca specializes in Piedmontese beef, considered by many chefs to be the most tender.

■ **Marco's** - 32748 Grand River, downtown Farmington, (248) 477-7777. Cost: Entrées \$16-\$27. Dinner hour: Begins 3 p.m. Monday-Friday, 4:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

Marco's is small, just 20 tables for up to 80 lucky diners. "It's a very romantic place - candlelight, white linen tablecloths and fresh flowers all over the place. It's very intimate, dimly lit, with

soft music in the background," says owner and chef Marco Conte.

■ **Mackinnon's** - 126 E. Main, Northville, (248) 348-1991. Cost: \$100 for two. Dinner hour: 5-10 p.m.

For 20 years, the restaurant's brick walls, lace curtains and Tiffany lamps have charmed countless diners.

■ **Fonte D'Amore** - 32020 Plymouth Road, Livonia, (734) 422-0770. Dinner hour: 4-10 p.m. Cost: \$12-\$25, regular menu.

Could lovers go wrong at a place whose name means "foun-

tain of love"? Impossible, said owner Luciano DeIsgnore. The setting is dark and soft-colored with cozy booths and a fireplace.

■ **Old Country Buffet** - is offering a free lunch or dinner to couples who have been 50 years or more on Monday, Feb. 14. Bring your marriage license to redeem your free meal. You can also pose with your loved one for a free photo, which can be picked up later.

Visit Old Country Buffet in Canton Township at 5864 N. Sheldon Road, (734) 207-8737 or in Westland at 6539 N. Wayne Road, (734) 696-8201.

# Celebrate Mardi Gras

# Indulgence is... Shopping!

Shop Laurel Park Place once each week from February 14 through Mardi Gras (March 7) and we'll reimburse one of your shopping trips!

In celebration of Mardi Gras, Laurel Park Place is helping you indulge in shopping! Shop each of the three weeks designated below and you will receive a Laurel Park Place gift certificate worth the value of your lowest weekly receipt! Plus, you can enter to win a trip for two to New Orleans including airfare, accommodations in the historic French Quarter, a shopping spree and more!

Here's how it works. Simply make a purchase of \$35.00 or more each of the following weeks and you will receive a strand of Mardi Gras beads:

- February 14 - February 20: purple beads
- February 21 - February 28: green beads
- February 29 - March 7: gold beads

Bring the beads and your receipt to the Mardi Gras cart near Center Court to redeem them. When you have one strand of beads, you'll be eligible to enter to win the trip to New Orleans. Two strands of different colored beads: you'll be eligible to enter to win the New Orleans trip and receive a coupon for a free jerked shrimp appetizer at the Real Seafood Grill with the purchase of an entree. Three strands of beads (one of each color): you'll be eligible to enter to win the New Orleans trip and you'll receive a Laurel Park Place gift certificate worth the value of your lowest weekly receipt!

\*These, hotel purchases and Laurel Park gift certificate sales excluded. Only one receipt allowed from a department store. Receipts cannot be combined. All beads must be accompanied by a receipt. Additional rules and regulations also apply and are available at the Mardi Gras cart or the Management Office.

## Laurel Park Place

Shop the difference.

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