

DINING

You'll have a 'Grand' time at homey cafe

BY MARY QUINLEY
SPECIAL WRITER

On a recent Thursday evening, Ellen and Gary Brockway of Livonia decided to meet some friends for dinner at The Grand Cafe.

"It was great!" said Ellen Brockway, a first-time patron at the downtown Farmington eatery. "The restaurant felt very homey and relaxed. I also like the fact that there is no smoking."

The Grand Cafe serves a potpourri of menu choices. Patrons can order gourmet specials — a South Pacific chicken pasta, a sweet and sour chicken over rice, or shawarma and hummus with pita.

How does exotic Hawaiian chicken, a salmon club, or magnificent eggplant (served on a bun) sound? Create-your-own pizza, a cucumber with raspberry vinaigrette and goat cheese sandwich, and, a selection of soups and salads are options.

Brockway ordered the raspberry chicken. She also had a garden salad with raspberry vinaigrette dressing that she described as "delicious." Her husband, Gary, ordered a Reuben sandwich.

"The garnishes, which were like a side dish, complimented the meal," she said. "There were oranges, kiwi, pomegranate and grapes."

Desserts were big and decadent, commented Brockway. "I had the Black Forest cake. My husband had the carrot cake. He finished it with a little help from his friends."

Lance Kawas has owned the eatery since April, 1997.

"I found a place to write my screenplay," said the Dearborn resident.

So, who's in the kitchen while he's writing?

"I've been doing the cooking," said Kawas. "I have (nise) trained three other people. My mamma taught me. She was a good cook."

The Grand Cafe

Where: 33316 Grand River Ave., (In the first block east of Farmington Road), in downtown Farmington, (248) 615-9181
Open: 10:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. Sunday-Thursday; 10:30 a.m. to midnight, Friday-Saturday; kitchen closes at 10 p.m. everyday.
Menu: Breakfast and brunch items, salads and soups, create-your-own pizzas, sandwiches, gourmet chicken and fish entrees, vegetarian selections and desserts; specialty coffee and non-coffee drinks, no alcohol.
Weekly events: Psychic Night, 7 p.m. Tuesday; Lawyer Night, 7 p.m. Wednesday; live entertainment, 8 p.m. Friday.
Saturday: Poetry Night, 8 p.m., every second and last Sunday of the month.
Non-smoking: 100 percent
Reservations: Yes, for parties of ten or more.
Cost: Entrees, no more than \$7; coffee and non-coffee drinks, \$2-\$3.
Credit cards: All majors except American Express.

'It was great! The restaurant felt very homey and relaxed. I also like the fact that there is no smoking.'

Ellen Brockway

Customer

When he purchased the restaurant, "the business wasn't doing good," said the 30-year-old. "I had to do a lot of changing to gourmet food with a coffeehouse theme. I added couches."

He also started some "theme" evenings.

For a fee, on Tuesdays, customers can converse one-on-one with a psychic, and, on Wednesdays, a lawyer is available for consultation.

Fridays and Saturdays, said Kawas, feature various entertainment from local artists. Every second and last Sunday of the month is poetry night. "Professionals and amateurs are welcome."

How does he describe the menu?

A blend of Los Angeles flavor with some French influence,

he said. "We're always coming up with new recipes. Whatever is unique and different. (For instance), customers can order any type of vegetable sandwich from asparagus to artichoke to portobello."

When you order a sandwich, ask for a sample of The Grand Mayo, a spicy herbal mayo. "We don't use regular mayonnaise," said Kawas.

Pricing is an important key to success, commented Kawas.

"(Customers can get) a gourmet portobello sandwich for \$6.50. I've priced it right for the people wanting here to accommodate their wallets."

Frequent patron Diane Pettis agrees.

"I usually go for coffee after the show," said the Redford resident. "It's not pricey or expensive."

Pettis also enjoys the salads. "What impressed me was the freshness of the curly endive and arugula."

She recommends the Saturday night folk singing.

Mary Quinley is a Livonia resident who writes about dining and travel for the Observer Newspapers.



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BRIDGES

What's for lunch: Lance Kawas presents a portobello mushroom sandwich, one of the items you'll find on the menu at The Grand Cafe. Sandwiches are beautifully garnished with fruits and vegetables.

WHAT'S COOKING

Send dinner specials, menu changes, restaurant renovations, and other items to Keely Wagonik, Assistant Managing Editor Features Group, Observer Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, 48150. To fax: (734) 921-7279 or e-mail kwagonik@oc.homecomm.net. We're putting together a list of St. Patrick's Day celebrations at local restaurants. If you're planning something special on Friday, March 17, let us know. We're also interested in hearing about your favorite seafood and fish restaurants.

The Toast of Hockeystown — Wine tasting evening to benefit the Konstantinov and Mnatsakanov Family Funds 8 p.m. Sunday, March 12 at Hockeystown Cafe, 2301 Woodward Ave., Detroit, inside the Second City Building. Tickets \$176 per person, call (313) 396-7575, guests must be at least 21 years of age.

Join the entire Red Wings team for an elegant evening of wine tasting to benefit the family funds of Vladimir Konstantinov and Sergei Mnatsakanov.

The event will feature a sampling of fine wines, cigars and a strolling buffet. Guests will also have the opportunity to bid on an array of sports memorabilia.

Taste of Northville — A Taste of Northville 5-8 p.m. Tuesday, March 21 at the Northville Community Center, 303 W. Main Street, Northville, will feature 70 exhibitors from retail, service and professional businesses in the Northville community. Area top rated restaurants and caterers will provide samples from their menus. Admission \$5 adults, \$4 seniors, \$3 children under age 12. Call (248) 349-7640 for information.

Mardi Gras Madness — The Henry Ford Community College Hospitality Department will hold its annual spring banquet 6:30-9:30 p.m. Saturday, April 1 in the Pagoda Room of the Student Center on the Dearborn campus.

HFCC students will prepare a variety of Southern, Cajun, Creole and Bayou style dishes. Tickets are \$36 per person, call (313) 845-9651. Event proceeds benefit the hospitality scholarship program.

New Orleans style masks and costumes are not required, but preferred. Prizes will be given for the best one. The HFCC Dixieland band will entertain guests throughout the evening.

Too Chez Restaurant — You can save 25 percent off every bottle on the wine list, over 300 labels, and Chez Restaurant, 27165 Sheraton Dr. in Novi, Monday-Thursday, through May 2000. Discount offered with meals only, wines by the glass are excluded. Call (248) 348-5555 for reservations and information.

D'Amato's — with restaurants in downtown Ann Arbor (734) 623-7400, and Royal Oak (248) 584-7400, has designed an online newsletter as part of its Web site. To check it out, visit www.damato.com

EATING OUT

Here are some of the restaurants we've recently featured on our Dining page. If you'd like to recommend a restaurant for us to feature, send menu, or suggestions to Keely Wagonik, Observer Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, fax (734) 921-7279, or e-mail kwagonik@oc.homecomm.net

Hockeytown Cafe — 2301 Woodward Ave., Detroit — inside the Second City Building, (313) 965-9500. Open: 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday-Tuesday; 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Wednesday-Thursday; 11 a.m.-2 a.m. Friday-Saturday. Menu: American favorites including ribs and burgers with an eclectic mix of entrees such as Spinach and Brie Encrusted Whitefish. Cost: Appetizers, \$5.95-\$9.95, sandwiches \$6-7, pasta, \$11.95-\$15.95, entrees,

\$13.95-\$21.95. Reservations: Recommended for dinner Credit cards: All majors accepted.

David's New York Deli — 15215 Farmington Road, south of Five Mile Road in Livonia. Phone (734) 425-8170. Fax (734) 425-0072. Open: 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday; 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday; closed Sunday. Menu: Twenty-six sandwiches ranging in price from \$2.50 to \$4.40. Salads, fries, pickles, deserts, soup, chili. Average lunch price: \$5, all major credit cards accepted.

Luigi's — 23360 Farmington Road, in the Downtown Shopping Center, across from

CVS/Pharmacy in Farmington, (248) 477-1880. Open: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., Monday-Friday; 4-10 p.m., Saturday; closed Sunday. Menu: Italian cuisine (a mix of northern and southern dishes), appetizers, soups, salads, sandwiches, pasta, seafood, and chicken, beef and veal entrees.

Desserts, vegetarian meals and daily specials. Wine, beer and liquor served. Reservations accepted for parties of five or more. Cost: Entrees range in price from \$6.95 to \$15.95. Burgers and sandwiches are \$3.95 to \$5.95. Credit cards: All cards except Diners Club.

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