The Lark wins fans with its special 'home cooking'

Editor's note: Who's the best upong Oakland County eateries! The Eccentric Newspapers held Greaders poll and we'd like to thate the results with Observer Raders. The Lark of West Bloom Feld was voted No. 1. Check the list of first, second and third place resturant winvers for more out-of-town dining recommendations.

Consider it home cooked.
Even if it's sea bass with caramelized onions, sweet red pppper, two olive compute and meuniere that you find on your plate.

meuniere that you find on your plate.

2 "One statement we hear from our patrons, which we love, is that people feel like they are visiting us in our home," says Jim Lark, owner of The Lark in West Bloomfield.

3 That's not just because the

Moomfield.
That's not just because the Intak's head chef, Marcus Haight, personally cooks every dish served. Or because the restaurant offers a mix of standard and cutting edge. French crisine.

dird and cutting teages a con-cipisine. The Lark's ambiance, from its European country inn charm to the warm reception given piptrons, spells home and hearth more than it does fancy, fussy dising. Smary and I designed the restaurant we'd most like to go to, Jim explained. We like to start with an hors d'ouver cart. We like to have choices and we like country inns.

We like to have choices and we like country inns."
Excentric readers like it, too.
They named The Lark the Best Oakland County eatery and placed it first in several categories in a recent restaurant reader polls.
Respondents didn't indicate why, but Jim suggests a few reasons.

3dns. "Our ambiance appeals to both men and women," he explained. "And pell after pell has shown that ambiance is the most impor-tant of three components — cui-sine, service and ambiance.

sine, service and ambiance.

"You better have the other
two. You can go a year or two on
strong ambiance but eventually
if you have mediocre food it will

The Lark was voted best overall restaurant by Eccentric readers. Here are some of their other choices:

■ BEST OVERAL - 1. The ark 2. Kruse & Muer 3

Lark 2. Kruse & Muer 3. Fenbodys

FINE DINING — 1. The Lark 2. Lelli's 3. Tribute

FAMILY DINING — 1.
Max & Erme's 2. Peabodys 3.
Tie between Bill Knapp's and Applebee's

ROMANTIC RESTAURANT — 1. The Lark 2. Fox & Hounds 3. Lelli's

FINEXPENSIVE — 1. Tie between National Coney and Alibi 2. Ram's Horn 3. Eightway tie

way tie

SERVICE — 1. The Lark
2. Kruise & Muer 3. Lelli's

DESSERT — 1. Kruse &
Muer 2. Tie between Big Boy
and The Lark 3. Tie between
Tribute, Whistle Stop, Sweet
Lorraine and Baker's Square.

get ydu."

The 52-seat restaurant works hard to keep a strong foothold in all three. The Larks visit France at least annually to eat at fine dining establishments, discover service innovations and collect new menu ideas. They also send Haight abroad every year.

"We believe in continuous improvement," Jim said. "I think we'r a lot better than when we opened."

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That was 20 years age when Jim, an attorney and developer, left the construction business to open a restaurant with his wife.

"There's an old saying that everyone wants to do three things: Build a home. I was a production home builder and built more than 1,000 homes. Write a book. I wrote a book. And open a restaurant.

"A lot of people just talk about things. We do things. We don't just talk about them."

But they do keep in touch with patrons through a monthly newsletter that often details the Larks' trips abroad. Jim pens



Gracious greaters: Jim and Mary Lark meet and seat every patron who walks through the door of their West Bloomfield restaurant.

the eight-ten page Food for Thought and Mary, the daughter of a photographer, takes the snepshots.

We The up on ideas when we tree! The hors decure truley in the street of the trule of the street of the trule of the street of

other restaurants."
He also cooks at home. His specialty is a French Canadian-style meat pie, although his four sons and one daughter ask him to make their favorite four-thesse macaroni casserole.
"He can cook anything," Mary said. "He never uses a cookbook. He has a great sense of taste and of what ingredients go together. It comes so natural to him."

Jim likes variety and makes suro his restaurant includes an celectic menu.

The fixed price dinners offer classic cuisine, such as roast prime beef and Yorkshire pudding, seafood, including roast lobster, duck, veal and lamb, as well as stack.

well as steak.

"I don't believe in trends," he said. "He who lives by the trend dies by the trend. We have the

The Lark serves four-course fixed price dinners starting at 6 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday. Prices range from \$57.50 to \$57.50. It is located on Farmington Road just north of Maple. For reservations call (248) 661-4466.



