

DINING

Hungry for fish? Head to the Plymouth Fish Market

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Happy Anniversary, Plymouth Fish Seafood Market, for 50 years of serving fish dinners good enough to ship to the Vatican.

For the past five decades, this small, storefront restaurant located in 115-year-old building in Plymouth's historic Old Village has deep-fried, grilled, baked and sold enough fish to fill an ocean, especially during Lent.

"Good Friday is our number one day. It's like our Christmas," said owner Vince Toia, who has owned the restaurant with his wife, Lori, for the past five years.

Besides serving succulent fish entrées such as grilled salmon, catfish or swordfish, the Toias stock over 20 varieties of fresh fish, as well as crab legs, frog legs and lobster tails. The fish arrives three times a week from



five distributors, including the Superior Fish Company in Royal Oak.

If you don't see what you want, they'll order it.

If you're really hungry for fish and chips, show up on a Monday. That's when the popular menu item goes into its all-you-can eat

mode. Endless amounts of lightly battered cod filets, potatoes or rice, homemade coleslaw and a roll are a bargain at \$7.69.

"The most pieces anyone ever ate was 21," said Lori.

"We never saw him again," said Vince.

"Can't make it on Monday? Come on Tuesday. That's the day Lori puts together her Baja-Style Fish Tacos — two taco shells stuffed with refried beans, deep-fried cod, tomatoes, onions, olive oil and seasonings, and a special cream sauce that goes on top.

"It's just fabulous," said Lori. We're the owners and we're always waiting for Tuesdays so we can eat them."

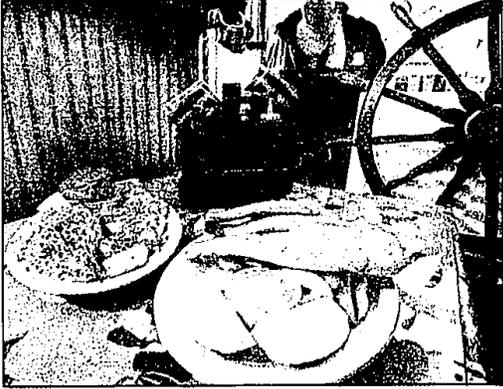
Customer Bob Hood of Jackson, who works in Livonia, stops by the Plymouth Fish Market at least twice a week. They know his usual order by heart: Grilled catfish with redskin potatoes.

"This is Bob's catfish," said Lori on her way to deliver the dish to Bob. "And it's not just any catfish. It's farm-raised so it doesn't taste murky."

"I just love it," said Hood. "I don't know what makes it so good. It just melts in your mouth. I never had a bad one yet."



STAFF PHOTOS BY BRIAN MITCHELL
Celebration: Vince and Lori Toia celebrate owning the Plymouth Fish Seafood Market for five years now. And for the past five decades, this small, storefront restaurant located in 115-year-old building in Plymouth's historic Old Village has deep-fried, grilled, baked and sold enough fish to fill an ocean.



Good eats: Tasty treats like fish and chips along with fried scallops at the Plymouth Fish Market in Old Village

Fish and chips

Turning out great fish and chips is a matter of proper cooking temperatures and good ingredients, said Vince. It took him six months to perfect his light and crispy batter.

"Now our customers just love it," he said.

If anybody should know about fish and chips it's the British, and Lori boasts that

transplants from Great Britain have become regular customers.

"They get excited about our fish and chips because it's the closest to what they had at home, except we don't serve smashed peas."

The Toias are generous with their servings. When I brought home two orders of fish and chips (three pieces of cod), my husband (a big guy) claimed there was enough for four meals. And when Vince stopped at my table to show off an entrée of salmon and redskin potatoes, I just knew the customer would need a take-home box.

Every order of fish comes with steak fries, redskins, or rice plus coleslaw and a roll. Lori said the rice, which is bouillon based with carrots, celery and onion, has become quite popular and is "a nice accompaniment to fish."

Even the homemade coleslaw, often the make-it-or-break-it

touch when judging a great fish and chip dinner, has a unique taste — still.

"We have people who don't like coleslaw say they like our coleslaw. That's a pretty good compliment," said Lori.

Lori and Vince make the Plymouth Fish Market a real family affair. They never dream of a bigger, grander place. A smaller restaurant allows them to have a "great clientele" and flexibility, said Vince.

"It's a casual place. We're not the dress-up, high-priced place. We like kids and families. There's nothing written in rock here. If a person wants something different, we'll do it."

The Toias (he's of Sicilian decent and she's Italian) also have a catering business, All Seasons Catering, which specializes in Italian cuisine. Call (734) 421-3268.

Cigar dinner is Rouge fundraiser

An elegant, five-course dinner featuring wild game and hand-rolled cigars will be the highlight of a Tuesday, March 12, fundraising event to support the educational programs of Friends of the Rouge, the 16-year-old non-profit environmental organization that conducts the annual Rouge Rescue river clean-up.

The event will include a silent auction. Tickets are \$125 each and are available by calling (313) 792-9900 or on the Friends of the Rouge Web site, www.therouge.org. Follow the instructions at the "Current Events" icon.

The dinner will be at Henriwothers in Southfield, and will be prepared by the restaurant's executive chef, Matthew Barkach. Meriwethers is at 25486 Telegraph, just north of 10 Mile Road. Cigars will be provided by Smokers Only of Allen Park and CAO. Non-smoking rooms will be available. Cocktails (cash bar) begin at 6 p.m. and dinner is at 7 p.m.

The dinner and auction will help raise funds to support the organization's school-based and community-based environmental education programming, including the nationally acclaimed Rouge Education Project and the popular Frog & Toad survey.

Nearly 35,000 students in Wayne, Oakland and Washtenaw counties have participated in the Rouge Education Project since it was established in 1987.

Students monitor the water quality in the Rouge River. The Michigan Department of Environmental Quality uses some of the data they collect.

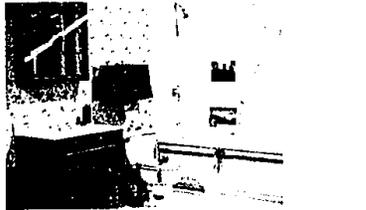
The Frog & Toad Survey is one of several volunteer projects offered by Friends of the Rouge. It asks volunteers to listen for the mating calls of frogs and toads. The data they collect helps to identify and protect dwindling wildlife habitat in the area. Friends of the Rouge was established in 1986 to promote restoration and stewardship of the Rouge River.



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- Air Massour Massage Bathtub by Jason
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APPLICATION DEADLINE FRIDAY, MARCH 22, 2002