

DINING OUT

Clawson Steak House – an oldie, but goodie

BY ESTHER ALLWEISS TSCHIRHART
SPECIAL WRITER

Jim and Ludy D'Onofrio enjoy visiting the Clawson Steak House several times a year for dinner and dancing.

"The bands play great 'mature' dancing music," says Jim D'Onofrio of Rochester Hills. "We appreciate the warm atmosphere and friendly staff that is consistently focused on customer satisfaction. The meals are excellent and priced just right."

Could anyone ask more from a night out?



Tasty treat: Chef John Alexopoulos with a chicken dish he prepared.

Providing the personal touch same morning, usually from

of a family-run operation, cousins Jim Alex and Nick Alexopoulos graciously welcome guests to their spacious restaurant in Clawson. John Alexopoulos, Nick's brother, stars in the kitchen.

The partners, all in their 40s, took over the restaurant from founders Paul and Gregory Alexopoulos in the mid-1980s. Their father and uncle purchased the former Feeny's in 1958, which evolved into the Clawson Lounge and Supper Club and today's venerable Clawson Steak House.

Though the chef frequently adds new recipes from his travels, doing the standards very well is what their clientele expects and receives. If you're seeking steak, "Filet mignon is the most popular dish we make here," says John Alexopoulos. Jim Alex finds hilarity in watching people – "even the little ladies" – polish off their own 30-ounce porterhouse steak.

Rack-cut lamb chops, center-cut pork chops and baby back ribs also are available, and Nick Alexopoulos says, "We have people who drive up from Toledo for our liver and onions."

Fresh fish is plentiful. It's ordered and delivered the same morning, usually from



Top choice: Porter House Steak at Clawson Steak House.

Superior Fish Company in Royal Oak. Ably served by Martha Gregor, my broiled Lake Superior white fish was delicately seasoned.

Horseradish-encrusted salmon, a sometime menu special, was another taste treat.

Leave room for desserts like crème brûlée and New York cheesecake. Chocolate Madness – a triple-threat concoction of brownie and chocolate mousse with a chocolate glaze – is a standout.

George Williams, the restaurant's original interior decorator, took the décor from "naïve place" to a warm, subdued color scheme following a 1987 fire. The steak house was shuttered for a year. Nick says the space was reconfigured to add a new room for banquets and create a handsome dining room with rounded, low-back chairs and booths along a wall. The same patterned upholstery line the bar-lounge area, where smoking is confined and efficiently venti-

Clawson Steak House

Address: 56 S. Rochester at 14 Mile Road, Clawson
Phone: (248) 588-5788
Web site: www.clawsonsteakhouse.com
Dining hours: 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Monday-Thursday and until midnight Saturday and Sunday
Menu: American dining standards, including steaks, chops and fresh fish, and daily lunch specials
Prices: Dinners, \$10.95-\$24.95. Lunches, \$6.95-\$23.95
Extras: Live entertainment and dancing Wednesday-Saturday. Meeting and banquet rooms

lated: Clawson's Steak House is a popular place for celebrating special occasions. "We had a 102nd birthday three years ago," recalls Nick. Jim remembers a couple married 80 years.

The dance floor fills up on Wednesday through Saturday nights, and not only with old-timers. John has noticed a renewed interest in dancing that includes touching. Bands are hired for 6-8 months on a rota-

ting basis.

The partners have many regular customers (including their dads once or twice a week), and some participate in the Clawson Steak House Golf Outing. Thousands of dollars have been given to the Clawson Lions Club for Leader Dogs for the Blind. The 15th annual event is June 18 at the Rochester Golf Club.

"We're lucky," says Nick. "We have the best customers and the best staff."

Oscar

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documentary *Young at Heart* about a southeast Michigan couple and she'll bring her Oscar night memorabilia."

Pamela Conn still remembers sitting in Row 5 at the aisle at the Academy Awards. The Plymouth resident won her Oscar with partner Sue Marx for a 1987 short documentary about a romance between two elderly artists who meet on a painting trip to England.

Since 1984, Conn has produced and directed films which have won awards in all major film competitions and festivals. She currently is producing a film on homelessness in the U.S. for the University of Massachusetts-Boston with Jeffrey Jones with whom she co-founded OneArts, a film company with a social conscious, in 1999.

"It was one of the most fun experiences in my life," said Conn. "It was kind of like a dream. It's exciting. I never expected to win so it was like being shot out of a cannon. It's an amazing star-studded experience. Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck were presenters just before I received my Oscar. They really are beautiful people."

Theater offers workshops

Walk & Squawk Performance Project will offer clowning, mask and autobiographical workshops in April and May at the Furniture Factory on Willis at Third in Detroit.

Audience members also may sit in on a technical rehearsal for Walk & Squawk's spring show, *Dirty Little Stories*, at 7 p.m. Monday, April 8. Tickets are \$5 for the rehearsal. The technical staff and director will discuss the play with the audience after the show. Upcoming workshops are:

- A family mask performance workshop for youngsters, age 6-11, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., April 20 and 27 and May 4. The workshop will explore play, storytelling, and simple gestures. Cost is \$90 per family.
- Clowning with Walk & Squawk director Hilary Ramsden, 7-9 p.m. May 2, 9 and 16. Cost is \$6.

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