

DINING OUT

Share our Strength event fights hunger with great taste

BY ELEANOR HEALD
SPECIAL WRITER

From 6-10 p.m. on Sunday, April 28, the area's best restaurants and wine purveyors will gather at Somerset Collection South in Troy for the Share our Strength (SOS) Taste of the Nation strolling dinner.

A stellar event last year at the same Somerset venue, it is again sponsored nationally by American Express and locally hosted by Mercedes-Benz and other businesses. SOS is the nation's largest culinary benefit, in which the restaurant and wine community shares its strength in the fight against hunger and poverty.

Event co-chairs are Unique Restaurant Corporation's Corporate Executive Chef Jim Barnett and Wine Director, Master Sommelier Madeline Triffon. Proprietors Denny and Dan Walsh of Ye Olde Wine Shoppe in Rochester Hills are the wine co-chairpersons.

Each year, the dinner raises much needed money for the local anti-hunger and anti-poverty efforts of the Foodbank of Oakland County, Gleaners Community Foodbank and Forgotten Harvest. One hundred percent of the \$100 per person ticket sales and all proceeds of the event go directly to fight hunger.

Tickets can be obtained by phoning Foodbank of Oakland County (248) 332-1473 or at Ye Olde Wine Shoppe at (248) 852-

5533.
If SOS is new to you, you need to know that it is one of the nation's leading anti-hunger, anti-poverty organizations that began in the basement of a row house on Capitol Hill in 1984. Today, it mobilizes thousands of culinary professionals to organize events such as Taste of the Nation, among its other creative partnerships with a range of industries.

Restaurant Who's Who
Participating restaurants in this year's SOS dinner read like the area's restaurant Who's Who list. Attendees are offered the rare opportunity to taste the varied food styles of many local restaurants all in one place.

Among headliners and naming only a few are Southfield's Beans & Cornbread with its unique spin on Southern cooking. At this table, try the Baby Sister Backyard Style Baby Back Ribs.

Chef Chris Brown from Brian Poley's of Five Lakes Grill in Milford will showcase this eatery's famous bistro-style cuisine with Smoked Duck Breast with Wild Greens and Mustard Vinaigrette. Chef/proprietor Steve Allen of Steve & Rocky's in Novi, perennial supporter of charity events, always prepares something special.

With Asian flavors one of the hottest food trends, there's plenty to sample in this style from

Southfield's Musashi. Troy's Mon Jin Lau or P.F. Chang's where Executive Chef Ted Tester will showcase his Chang's Chicken in Soothing Lettuce Wraps.

Seafood lovers can stroll to the tables of Northern Lakes Seafood Company, Charley's Crab, McCormick & Schmick's Seafood, Tom's Oyster Bar or No. VI Chop House & Lobster Bar where Chefs Eric Ward and Brian Perrone will offer Petite Lobster Tails with No. VI House Whipped Potatoes.

Observer & Eccentric food columnist and Southfield's Golden Mushroom Executive Chef Michael Trombly is on a seafood bent, offering Smoked Salmon with Crispy Potatoes and Boursin Cheese. The same can be said for Chef Matt Schellig of URC's Duet restaurant, at Orchestra Hall in Detroit, who will prepare Paper Wrapped Shrimp.

Two of Detroit's casino's will show off their restaurants. Grilled Portabellas will be highlighted by MGM Grand's Brown Derby while Master Chef Michael Russell of Motor City Casino's Tridescence will have you asking for seconds of his Pan Seared Foie Gras with Simmered Fennel and Cracked Black Pepper Caramel.

To tickle your sweet tooth, Chef Kelli Lewton, an Observer & Eccentric Taste section columnist and proprietor of Aunt Olive's Good Food 2 Go, will present Chocolate Fantasy Bark. Birmingham's Forte restaurant party



Cheers: Denny and Dan Walsh (left to right) of Ye Olde Wine Shoppe with Master Sommelier Madeline Triffon.

chef Tanya Fallon will fill a table with her famous sweets. Rocky Mountain Chocolate Factory will serve Caramel Apples and Fudge and Nut Brittle. Nothing fishy from Birmingham's Streetside Seafood; Chef Sharon Juergens will slice up Key Lime Pie.

What's great food without great wine? Like a day without sunshine! Here are just a few of the show stopper wines you may wish

to try:
■ White: 1999 Louis Latour Chassagne Montrachet Merguez; 2001 Santa Julia Torrontes; and 2000 Kris Pinot Grigio.

■ Red: 1999 Canoe Ridge Merlot, Washington State; 1997 King Estate Pinot Noir, Oregon; 1998 Montevina Torre d'Oro SHR Zinfandel; 1997 Clos du Bois Marlstone; 1997 Banfi Brunello di Montalcino; 1998 La Bracciano

Vino Nobile di Montepulciano; 1999 Terrazas Malbec Reserva, Argentina; and 1999 Pikes Shiraz.

Eleanor Heald is a Troy resident who writes about restaurants, food, wine and spirits for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers. To leave her a voice mail message, dial (734) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, mailbox 18648.



Culinary wizards: Matthew Prentice, President and CEO of Unique Restaurant Corp. (left) with Jim Barnett, executive corporation chef.

TABLE HOPPING

Send items for consideration in Table Talk to Kately Kateski Wygonik, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150, fax (734) 591-7279 or (248) 644-1314. E-mail, copy and paste into message or send as a text file: kucygonik@ec-homecomm.net

Too Chez Bistro - has made yet another change to reflect its casual bistro-style atmosphere. The restaurant has pared down its extensive wine list to offer a one-page list of Bistro Wines, which range in price from \$15-\$35. The new list offers vintages from producers in France, Italy, California, New Zealand

and Australia, just to name a few.

"The purpose of Too Chez Bistro's recent transition was to become more casual and approachable," said John Baumgartner, general manager. "We want picking a bottle of wine to be fun and easy; it shouldn't be intimidating or seem like rocket science."

If the simplified list of vintages still seems overwhelming, guests can take advantage of Baumgartner's knowledge of wines, as he has received recognition as a Certified Sommelier by the Court of Master Sommeliers. Connoisseurs and patrons cele-

brating a special occasion can still view the more exclusive reserve list that features more rare vintages. Too Chez features a fresh and flavorful menu served in a casually warm, bistro-style atmosphere. Lunch and dinner are served Monday-Saturday, and brunch is served Sunday, with seating in the bi-level dining room, in the private chef's room, and in the screened patio during summer months.

Too Chez Bistro is at 27166 Sheraton Drive in Novi, corner of I-96 and Novi Road, across from Twelve Oaks Mall. For more information or to make reservations, call (248) 348-5555.



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