

DINING OUT

Giorgio's serves gourmet dishes counterside

BY NICOLE STAFFORD

STAFF WRITER

nstafford@home.com.net

It's tempting to say ambiance isn't a factor at Giorgio's.

Patrons — most are regulars — come to the former Coney Island for the "counterside gourmet" eats, rather than the lime green countertop with a bird's eye view of a steamy grill, old-fashioned cash register and Kellogg's cereal boxes.

Giorgio's is what Midwesterners call a diner, and patrons seem to get a kick out of the greasy-spoon-gourmet paradox. Along

with the speedy, no-fuss-no-muss service, Giorgio's on Greenfield in Oak Park, is a place for food lovers, not restaurant snobs.

When founder and co-owner Giorgio Golematas, a native of Greece, opened the restaurant, he was determined to serve some of the gourmet food he had made as a cook at the London Chop House and several other fine food establishments in metropolitan Detroit.

By the way, Giorgio's first job was bus boy.

"When he bought this place, he said 'I want to try some of that stuff here,'" says Giorgio's brother

and current business partner Bill Golematas. "It took off. In six months, he changed this place from nobody being here to a line out the door every night."

Interestingly, Giorgio bowed out of the Oak Park restaurant for several years, having sold it to his cousin to open a restaurant in what is now the Ocean Grille in downtown Birmingham. He later bought back into Giorgio's, joining his brother in business.

Last month, the Golematas brothers opened a second Giorgio's in West Bloomfield. The menu, prices and concept — gourmet classics in a diner setting — are the same.

On the menu is a mix reasonably priced, traditional entrees like Veal Marsala (\$11.50), Steak Diane, (\$13.95), Filet Mignon (\$14.95) with zing (zip) sauce and Shrimp Scampi (\$11.95).

All "counterside gourmet" entrees are served all day and come with cup of homemade soup, salad and bread.

The Fresh Lake Superior Whitefish (\$12.50), a house favorite, comes surrounded by a tangy sauce of garlic, lemon butter and wine.

There's also a pasta menu offering classic sauces like bolognese

Giorgio's

Where: 25920 Greenfield, just south of 11 Mile Road in Oak Park, (248) 968-4060

Open 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday-Saturday

Menu: Classic gourmet dinners such as Steak Diane, Shrimp Scampi and Veal Marsala plus a pasta menu and selection of Coney Island-style dishes, including salads, sandwiches, burgers, gyros and breakfast (served until 4:30 p.m.). No wine, beer or liquor served

Cost: \$8.95-14.95 for "Counterside Gourmet" entrees, which include cup of soup, salad and bread; \$9-12.95 for pasta dishes, which include soup or salad and bread; \$2.65-7.95 for salads, sandwiches and lunch specialties

Reservations: No

Payment: Cash only

■ New location — 6215 Orchard Lake Road, West Bloomfield, (248) 737-3636. Open 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday-Thursday, 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday-Saturday



STAFF PHOTO BY TOM HOFFMAYER

Lunch time: Patrons quickly fill up counter seats at Giorgio's "counterside gourmet" restaurant in Oak Park.

(\$9.95), carbonara (\$10.95) and arabiata (\$9). Pasta servings are heaping and come with choice of soup or salad and bread. Patron favorites include Linguine Alla Vongole (\$10.95) with red or white clam sauce and Penne Alla King (\$9), penne pasta and fresh broccoli sautéed in olive oil and garlic.

For diners who have space for dessert, indulge in Cherries Jubilee (\$4.75), Penches Flambé (\$5.25) or Bananas Foster (\$5.25).

The remainder of Giorgio's menu is devoted to more traditional diner fare, including salads, sandwiches, burgers and breakfast. The Giorgio Burger (\$5.50) comes open-faced and sauced with mango chutney, mustard and bordelaise sauce. Steak-fried potatoes help with soaking up all the tasty sauce.

It must be said "counterside gourmet" doesn't soar to the level of Tribute. But don't be surprised to find Giorgio's packed with discerning eaters who can probably afford to eat anywhere among the diverse clientele.

On our Friday night visit, we



Pan magic: Bill Golematas, who owns and operates Giorgio's with his brother Giorgio Golematas, flames cherries for Cherries Jubilee.

observed a Jaguar and Mercedes-Benz parked out front. A FOX 2 news van pulled up, too. Apparently employees of the Southfield tele-

vision station are fond of Giorgio's, as are local sports figures. It just goes to show location isn't everything, if the food is good.



Heaping helpings: Ziti Arabiata is among the Italian favorites on Giorgio's pasta menu. Pasta servings are hefty and include soup or salad and bread. Prices range \$9-12.95.

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