

TAPAWINGO

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In Paris but now in Burgundy.

"From that time on," Peterson said, "I wanted to be part of the world of cuisine because I had never experienced anything like it. I was hooked."

Back in the U.S., Peterson worked as chef at the Rowe Inn, also in Ellsworth, until 1984 when the parcel, suitable for a small restaurant on beautiful St. Claire Lake, became available. He bought it, opened Tapawingo, and five years ago, remodeled and expanded it. A modest, contemporary decor with muted colors, announces that food is the show. When your plate is empty, the incredible scenery plays an interlude.

In the early years, Peterson served as both chef and proprietor. However, he noticed something special about Chef Stuart when he hired him nearly two years ago, barely graduated from the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, but with kitchen work experience under skilled chefs since he was 15 years old.

At first, Chef Stuart held the title Chef de Cuisine and worked with "Pete." In a few short months, he earned the title of Executive Chef. "Pete has given me full reign," Chef Stuart noted. "That includes the stage and clientele. I've not been under any restraints and it has been easy for me to understand the Tap's clients from the beginning."

Peterson more than returns the compliments.

"I am in awe of Stuart's talents," he said. "There are food passionate people and then there's Stuart. He has boundless energy and amazing creativity."

Chef Stuart has advanced the intricacy of food preparation at the Tap, whose world-traveled guests have heightened expectations. The first hors d'oeuvre presentation indicates that Chef Stuart is far ahead of

any anticipation curve, that lengthens course after course.

FOOD AND WINE

To create his menus, Chef Stuart uses seasonal produce from several northern Michigan farms. Game hens, rabbits and ducks are sourced from a local farm in Boyne City. There are generally two fresh fish options available, flown in from a purveyor located in the northeast.

The freshest lamb came from a little-known purveyor of personalities from a simple roasted rack with seasonal plate garnishes to a nine-spice rub, ushering in North African and Mediterranean flavors.

"Rabbit," Chef Stuart said, "has been the biggest challenge for me." Basically, what has become his rabbit art form defies description. It includes a cure and confit of the front legs.

Sausage from the rear legs serve as the loin portion of the French rack. It's served with a cannelloni crepe, stuffed with the confit meat and appropriate vegetable garnish. "It will be on the winter menu again," Chef Stuart assured.

Sommelier Ron Edwards, who has passed the advanced level examination on his way to hopefully achieving Master Sommelier status, is a consummate wine pro. The Tap's wine list includes blockbusters, icons, legends and cult wines for those who want them. But Edwards' goal is to add more value-oriented wines in the \$50-\$80 range. He is expanding the number of crisp, vibrant, food-friendly wines from New Zealand and more particularly, Albarinos from Spain. Syrah and blends from the southern Rhone fit his aims to get wine drinkers out of a rut. "I want Americans to explore the world of wine," he concluded.

MORE CULINARY ADVENTURES

Tapawingo offers one and two-day cook-

ing classes, except in summer months. Peterson conducts food and wine tours to Europe. Alexander Zonjic & Friends entertain at garden parties. One is upcoming on September 15, 2002 from 2-5 p.m. at \$125 per person inclusive of Zonjic's performance, all foods, beverages and gratuities. Saturday and Sunday, September 28 and 29, 2002 is Wine Collector's Weekend. The cut-off date to reserve for this tasting of great wines from Bordeaux, Burgundy and beyond is today, September 12, 2002. Check out Tapawingo events on the Web site www.tapawingo.net or make inquiries by e-mail to tapdining@aol.com. However, reservations must be made by phone. There's culinary excellence and a whole lot more at Tapawingo!

Eleanor Heald is a Troy resident who writes about dining, 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.



Tapawingo executive chef Stuart Brinoz begins orchestration of a menu item.

Taste foods from more than 50 eateries and help culinary scholarship fund

BY ALEX LUNDBERG
STAFF WRITER

More than 60 restaurants, food providers, beverage purveyors and more food experts than you could shake a French knife at, will take part in Schoolcraft College's Culinary Extravaganza 2002.

The showcase of all things edible will be held from 2-5 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 22 in the Waterman Campus Center at the college, located at 18600 Harper, between north of Six Mile, just west of I-275.

Schoolcraft spokeswoman Kathy Hulik said the \$50 per person entrance fee goes to the school's scholarship fund.

"It's a fundraiser for all of our students' scholarships, not just the culinary arts program," she said. "It's the biggest one of the year."

Depending on how many people request — and qualify for — scholarships, around 400 students a year get assistance from the school's scholarship foundation to the tune of \$350,000 a year. They hope to raise around \$100,000 with this year's event.

Of course, because it is a culinary event, representatives of the student-run American Harvest restaurant will also have a booth at the show.

"They make an enormous amount of wonderful food," Hulik said. "Everything is sold at cost, so you can spend \$15 to \$20 for a lunch that would cost you \$40 to \$50 at other restaurants."

Not all of the participants in the extravaganza are restaurants. Vince Mucci, owner of Mama Mucci's Pasta in Canton, has taken part in the event for the last five years. He said everyone in the company likes to help out.

"They get to meet people and talk about the product," he said. "They also get out of the office." Mucci will be showcasing an Italian herb papardelle in a simple tomato basil marinara. Papardelle is a wide noodle (twice as wide as fettuccini) and a traditional fall dish.

"It's got more body than

other pastas, it's good for cooler weather," Mucci said. "The marinara is our best-selling sauce."

Aside from the "meet and greet" with their customers, they're also showcasing Mama Mucci's line of products. The company makes 300 different pastas for restaurants and offers 12 for retail sales.

"We help educate people and promote who we are and what we've got for sale," Mucci said. The owners of the Michigan Star Clipper Dinner Train are more interested in letting people know where they're going. Truth be told, they aren't going that far. But, it's the journey that counts.

"We start out in Walled Lake then go west to Wisconsin then east to West Bloomfield," said Marketing Assistant Caryn Lindow.

They serve dishes like lobster, Florentine blisque, which they'll present at Schoolcraft later this month. This is their first year in the extravaganza and the Clipper team is looking to get the word out.

"We're doing it to bring in business and let people know about dining on the train," Lindow said. "We're a traveling restaurant with live entertainment."

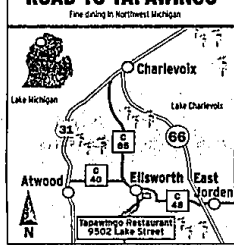
Aside from the restaurants and purveyors, Central Distributors of Beer, the Michigan Grape and Wine Council, the Cadillac Coffee Co. and Pepsi will also be on hand with tastings of a wide variety of products.

There will be a live auction featuring everything from hotel stays to vacations and cooking classes. For tickets, call the Schoolcraft Development Office at (734) 462-4670.

Here's a sampling of participating restaurants and food companies:

Papa Joe's Gourmet Market, Carvers Steak & Chops, Zoupi, Holiday Market, Ashby's Sterling Ice Cream, Roosevelt's Billiards/Bar & Grill, Vine 2 Wine Custom Winery, Aunt Olives, Great Oaks Country Club, Villa Maria Restaurant.

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