

FOOD

DINE OUT
DETROIT



FOOD STUFF

LEAVES A GOOD TASTE

On Friday, June 2, the 11th Annual Dine Out Detroit will offer food lovers a chance to fight AIDS by going out to eat. More than 100 metro Detroit area restaurants will donate 10 percent of that day's breakfast, lunch and dinner sales to the Midwest AIDS Prevention Project (MAPP), Michigan's largest non-profit AIDS education organization. Restaurants include Fiddleheads, Bucca di Beppo, Atlas Global Bistro, Café Cortina, Majestic Café, Bastone, Carl's Chop House, Union Street, Zumba, and Via Nove. For more information, visit dineoutmichigan.org or call MAPP at 248-545-1435.

SIX ON NINE

Assaggi Mediterranean Bistro is marking six years in Ferndale by offering a three-course, fixed-price dinner featuring exciting seasonal specialties until June 11. That's appetizer, entrée and dessert for \$29 per person, plus tax and gratuity. At 330 W. Nine Mile Rd., Ferndale; 248-584-3499.

CHEW AND VIEW

For those who like a side of art with their food, a new exhibit is up at Cass Cafe called *Assemble*, featuring mixed-media work from Christine Monhollen, Wade Rosenthal, Paul Schwarz and Robin Sommers. At 4620 Cass Ave., Detroit; 313-831-1400.

Know of any new restaurants, special dinners or food-related events? Let us know. Send materials two weeks in advance to Food Stuff, Metro Times, 733 St. Antoine, Detroit, MI 48226 or e-mail mjackson@metrotimes.com.

MT photo: Rob Widdis



Vanilla bean waffle with fresh fruit.

A morning muse

Café Muse

317 S. Washington Ave., Royal Oak
248-544-4749

Scrambles \$6.95-\$8.95, lunch salads and sandwiches \$4.95-\$7.95.

Restroom not fully handicap accessible

by Jane Slaughter

Everyone should own a restaurant at some time in his life. A debatable premise, certainly, although many ex-athletes and other celebs go for it. But more power to anyone who thinks that the world needs just one more restaurant, and this is it.

And even more power to the man who opens a 20-seat breakfast place and hopes to make a living thereby. Chef Greg Reyner embarked on his first restaurant

March 14 with partner David Smith, doing all the cooking himself and expanding his empire by adding a whopping six more seats on the sidewalk outside.

If any new venture deserved to succeed, it's Café Muse, which takes over from the departed 317 Café Calypso and thus takes advantage of the lovely renovations made by the former owners. The ceiling of the tiny dining room employs a washboard motif (sounds odd on paper, but it's charming), each table sports a fresh mum, and the food is breakfast and lunch fare with some welcome individual twists. A recurring image in the restaurant's design is the prettiest of the three muses from Botticelli's "Allegory of Spring" (aka "Venus on the half-shell").

Doing her job well, the muse inspired the chef to create French toast stuffed with mascarpone, orange rum raising pancakes, and a vanilla bean waffle. Reyner chooses to serve scrambled eggs rather than omelets, because he prefers a slightly looser dish. One of my companions found her scramble too loose, in fact, but I thought it was fine, and I presume you could ask for a few seconds more in the pan if you were worried about wateriness.

The "exotic mushroom scramble" is rich with truffle oil and a bit of Boursin cheese. It's topped with shredded basil, which also goes well with the sweet potato side dish. The potatoes are scented with *garam masala*, the Indian spice blend (think of spices beginning with "C" and add nutmeg). Reyner sees it as a "good all-around spice" and says he uses it for warmth, depth and background. Believe me,

this marriage of Old World spices and New World root works terrifically, but you may order garlic-fried potato fingerlings instead.

If you're accustomed to Sunday morning lox and cream cheese, a variation is the scramble with smoked salmon and mascarpone. The salmon, of course, needs the richness of the double-cream cheese to ameliorate its saltiness, and tossing it all in eggs and Gruyère is just gilding the lily. Another scramble choice incorporates *ammoglio*, a mortar-and-pestle pounding of garlic, basil, peppercorns and tomatoes.

On Mother's Day, Reyner introduced crepes, and he plans to make them a regular feature on weekends. My salmon and asparagus crepe was large — there went the owners' profit margin for the day — the salmon mild, the vegetable crunchy, though the Hollandaise sauce was not assertive enough. The crepes are prepared with half whole-wheat flour, which makes for more flavor.

Other crepe choices were beef bourguignon with *ammoglio*, or chicken, mushrooms and Emmentaler. Cheese of some kind, sharp or creamy, accompanies pretty much everything here.

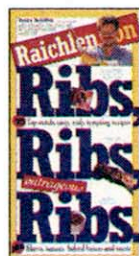
The muses told Reyner to use local products where possible. Bread is from Avalon, which means excellent sourdough toast. Peameal bacon is cured by a fellow from Harrison Township. Peameal bacon, you can take local pride in knowing, is a southwest Ontario specialty. It's a cut of loin cured in a salt-sugar brine and then rolled in corn meal, producing a slab that looks and tastes like a thin boneless pork chop, rather than Canadian bacon. You get two of 'em for \$3. I actually preferred chicken-apple sausage, however: two fat links that squish satisfyingly when you bear down. The apple flavor is strong and mellowed by the chicken.

Readers, I neglected to sample the soup, salad and sandwich portion of the menu, so sue me. Going out for lunch is pretty commonplace, but eating breakfast out is a special occasion, don't you agree? In any case, from 11 a.m. on you'll find delightful combinations designed to tempt the office workers from their cubicles.

These include organic greens tossed with heavenly sounding warm goat cheese and poached pears; a chicken salad sandwich with walnuts, dried cherries, *garam masala*, and cheddar cheese; a turkey pesto sandwich with fontina; and a grilled smoked salmon sandwich with Gruyère.

Café Muse is open for breakfast and lunch 7 a.m.-2 p.m. Tuesday through Friday and 7:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. on weekends. Breakfast is served till closing. The partners hope to open in the evening soon, for dessert and coffee. May their muse continue to inspire.

Jane Slaughter dines for Metro Times. Send comments to letters@metrotimes.com.



EAT THE PAGE

STEVEN RAICHLEN has not only written some of our favorite books on grilling and barbecuing, but he also runs Barbecue University. That fact should make you want to attend summer school. Hot off the press, his latest book, *Raichlen on Ribs*, *Ribs*, *Outrageous Ribs* (Workman Publishing Company, \$12.95) holds the keys to rib cookery, explaining the differences between various cuts of ribs and giving instructions on trimming, seasoning or marinating. He covers direct grilling, smoke-roasting, smoking and spit-roasting. Remember these words: low and slow.



SENSIBLE ROTGUT

IF WINE snobbery offends you, if an \$8 bottle of wine seems affordable only to the highfalutin, if you avoid kerosene not for the taste but because you are fearful of ignition, then bumwine.com is your salvation. MD 20/20, Night Train and the venerable Thunderbird are a few of the selections discussed on this Web site, which is proof that you can find anything on the Internet. Rankings include "worst taste," "getting wasted" and "warmth." Conspicuously absent is Charlie Milan's Nature Boy, one of the cheapest buzzes (so we hear) in the bygone '60s for local high-schoolers, now in their 60s.



IT WORKS

IF YOU cannot live without one of these, you must be one hell of a guitar player and pizzaiolo or definitely a wannabe. This Fender Stratocaster Pizza Peel is the coolest pizza tool ever. It would probably make frozen pizza taste good. You'll have to be a woodworker too, as it's not available anywhere that we are aware of. If you can make one of these, is a guitar-shaped pie next?