

RESTAURANT ROW

Restaurateur hopes to expand

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*Bill
Lubinger*

I can't even pronounce foie gras. To me, it's just p o m p o u s gooseliver, anyway.

But even a pedestrian palate, with a journalistically trained eye and ears and an open mind (and, for the boss's sake, an ability to meet deadline from time to time), can inform. And that's what I hope you find here.

In 18 years with The Plain Dealer, I've covered real estate, development and the business of sports and written a weekly personal finance column called "Simple Solutions."

I'm a features reporter for the Arts & Life section, and I've been given the privilege of writing Restaurant Row.

The way I see it, this is *your* table, not mine, and you hold a standing reservation. I'll be your server — although the only tips I accept are restaurant news and suggested topics you'd like to see offered on the menu. (See how to reach me, below.)

You won't read restaurant reviews here. We have reviewers. I'll consult with them when you need an opinion or dining suggestion.

Even where to find the best foie gras.

Swimmingly . . . Ted Sahley, 33-year-old owner of the Nauti Mermaid restaurant and Mercury Lounge, both on West Sixth Street in downtown Cleveland's Warehouse District, is looking to expand his Key West sports-bar concept to the suburbs.

"I've got everything in a row," he said. "All I've got to do is pull the trigger."

In his sights: the spot of a former restaurant near Rockside and Brecksville roads in Independence. If lease negotiations go well, plans are to open a second Nauti Mermaid by spring.

Longer term, Sahley hopes to add one or two more locations. He's scouting sites in Mentor and either Avon or Rocky River.

Pound, a hot-dog joint at Ohio 82 and Ridge Road in North Royalton, reopens Tuesday, Jan. 2, as the **Rockin' Rockside Cafe**, a shakes-and-sammies restaurant with 1950s-style decor.

Its new owners, the husband-wife team of Mike and Mellony Salsgiver, previously ran the Rockside Cafe in an Independence office building. They lost their lease in July after seven years. Before that, Mellony worked her parents' West Side Market veggie stand for 29 years. And Mike, who swears by his wife's homemade chicken salad, was a truck driver for 25 years until diabetes forced him off the road and into food. They'll serve breakfast, lunch and dinner daily.

Reversal of fortune . . . How do you turn blue Monday into gold? Discounts, baby.

This summer, **Pickwick & Frolic Restaurant and Club**, near Gateway, unveiled a "Monday Sucks! . . . So lunch is five bucks" promotion. You can't give away the entire house, so a special \$5 menu was created. Available from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., it includes such dishes as a pesto chicken calzone, pulled pork and cheddar wrap, and angus and chorizo meatloaf. The promotion has been a smash. (Who says our dining loyalty can't be bought?)

"It took Monday from being our worst day of the week to our best day of the week," said John Lorince, marketing director.

Ready for takeoff . . . James Massey is the new executive chef at **Amelia's**, the restaurant at the Sheraton Cleveland Airport Hotel near Cleveland Hopkins Inter-

ROW RESOURCES

Nauti Mermaid, 1378 West Sixth St., in downtown Cleveland's Warehouse District; 216-771-6175.

Rockin' Rockside Cafe (opens Tuesday, Jan. 2), 13933 Ridge Road, North Royalton; 440-582-3600.

Pickwick & Frolic Restaurant and Club, 2035 East Fourth St., downtown Cleveland near Gateway; (216) 216-241-7425.

Amelia's at the Sheraton Cleveland Airport Hotel, 5300 Riverside Drive, Cleveland, near the airport; 216-267-1500.

Fourth Street Bar & Grill, 402 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, near Gateway; 216-298-4070.

XO Prime Steaks, 500 W. St. Clair Ave., in Cleveland's Warehouse District; 216-861-1919.

national Airport. He arrives from the Wyndham Cleveland Hotel, Playhouse Square, where he was executive chef for three years.

Massey, who trained at Canyon Ranch resort, a popular Tucson, Ariz., health spa — among other places — will launch his new menu Thursday, Feb. 1. It will feature a mix of new-American, hearty Midwestern plates, he said, with some twists. At the Wyndham, for instance, he made his paella with saffron linguine instead of saffron rice. Massey hinted that his braised short ribs and filet mignon, and a Mediterranean appetizer with two types of hummus, will provide more quirky surprises.

Kingpin . . . Will Greenwood, the award-winning Southern California-based chef, may have designed the menu for the 4th Street Bar & Grill, but Todd DiCillo is the guy who must bring it to life. DiCillo, executive chef of the week-old downtown restaurant built as part of the chic Cor-

ner Alley bowling lanes/martini bar, was formerly executive chef of the Ohio University Inn and Conference Center in Athens and at the Hillbrook Club in Chagrin Falls. You'll be able to watch his crew in action. The 20-foot-long kitchen with a wood-burning oven and counter seating is open for all to see. In need of whimsy? Among the appetizers: a four-some of sliders. But rather than merely a plate of miniburgers drowned in chopped onions — not that there's anything wrong with that — they slide in as mini-Rueben, barbecue pork, portobello and Philly-style (\$10).

Washed out . . . Waters Restaurant in Hudson, which opened in summer 2002 and featured a waterfall in the main dining room, has closed.

VIP eats . . . Each week, I hope to conclude with the cravings of a familiar Clevelander by asking the simple question, "What's your favorite local restaurant, your must-have dish there and why?"

Leading off, Fred Nance, managing partner of Squire Sanders & Dempsey: "My favorite restaurant is XO [Prime Steaks], over on the corner of West Sixth Street and St. Clair Avenue. It's the steaks that are just wonderful. They have these USDA prime steaks, and the filet is out of this world. There are a couple of side dishes that are favorites of mine. They have a collard greens [and tasso ham] egg roll. They also have this truffled creamy sweet corn that's fabulous."

To reach this Plain Dealer reporter: blubinger@plained.com, 216-999-5531