

RESTAURATEUR

Official Publication of the Western New York Chapter of the New York State Restaurant Association

SERVING • ALLEGANY, CATTARAUGUS, CHAUTAUQUA, ERIE, GENESEE, NIAGARA, ORLEANS AND WYOMING COUNTIES

Volume 10 - Number 8

October 2010

Local Restaurant Week Up and Running



October 4th - 10th



Jenny and Scott Rossi, City Grille get some pointers from Vince McCogenghy Local Foodservice



Kathy Donaldson is ready for record breaking crowds at the Siena on Main St. in Snyder

At City Grill our culinary team is lead by Scott Rossi, an Executive Chef from New York City with 20 years of restaurant and hotel experience. Through his experience in the hotel, restaurant, private club and corporate catering industries, he has acquired extensive knowledge of American, French, Italian, and Japanese cuisine.

Chef Rossi now focuses on developing the culinary teams for City Grill 2 and 15 Mile both of which he owns with his wife and partner, Virginia "Jenny" Ross. Virginia is a graduate of both the Culinary Institute of America with a degree in the Culinary Arts, and of Boston University School of Hospitality Administration.

Special Offer from City Grill

Monday - Friday

Lunch for 2 for \$20.10 Includes:

(Tax and Gratuity Excluded)

1. Choice of Soup or Salad for each Guest
2. Choice of 2 Sandwiches

Lunch for 1 for \$20.10 Includes:

(Tax and Gratuity Excluded)

1. One Main Course Entree
- Friday-Saturday

Dinner for 1 for \$20.10 Includes:

(Tax and Gratuity Excluded)

1. Main Course Entree
2. Dessert

The Siena has not posted their \$20.10 Restaurant Week deals at publication time but you can be assured that Chuck Mauro and his team will have some worthy and creative ideas.

-More members listings can be found on Page 6-



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www.nysra.org/associations/2497/chapters.cfm

Last week the New York State Restaurant Association held a 'vendors seminar' in New York City for chapter presidents and board members. I was invited to attend along with another director from the WNY chapter. The state association was going to pick up the travel tab for the two of us on a one day jaunt to New York for the seminar.

My initial thought was, 'Wow, that's not going to be a cheap bill just to attend a five hour seminar. Will the money spent really be worth it?'

The simple answer: Absolutely! Obviously, I know the association has many partners that offer great cost savings benefits to members, but I truly did not know that there were so very many! It turns out that my initial thought about the expense of the trip was way off base. I was so focused on the expense of the trip that I didn't see the forest for the trees. The knowledge gained at the seminar will more than pay for what it cost to get us there and back. Armed with the information garnered at the meeting, I am positive that we can save members here in WNY a bunch of money by utilizing some of the state association's programs. And that is not even taking into account the partnerships we have here in Western New York and the money that can be saved by utilizing these local programs.

This is exactly where the phrase 'Membership Pays' comes from. It's that simple - if you take advantage of the benefits of membership. Don't know where to begin to look? Don't know who to call? No problem. We know that you are busy running a business and that your time is valuable. For that reason we are simplifying the whole information gathering process by giving members a chance to peruse the various WNY chapter partners and see what they have to offer. The chapter will be hosting a 'Benefits Bash' on Tuesday, October 19th at which will be vendors, companies, and organizations to answer any questions you may have about how to improve your business. I would encourage you, at the very least, to stop by for some complimentary food and drink with other restaurant people. Who knows, you might even find that you can save a buck or two.....

Fill those seats!

Rob

Benefits Bash!

Tuesday - October 19th - 5:30 - 8:30

Pettibones Grille @ Coca-Cola Field

~ more details on page 7 ~

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Melissa A. Fleischut - Director of Government Affairs - New York State Restaurant Association



STRAIGHT AHEAD

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Honest Value and Treating the Guests Right

In this period when food service operators are doing everything possible to increase sales and keep guests, I thought the following comments of the CEO of the Cracker Barrel Country Store organization are not only interesting but uncomplicated and to the point, "Honest value and treating the guests right."

Michael Woodhouse, president and CEO of Lebanon Tennessee-based Cracker Barrel Country Store is proud of how the chain of 594 restaurants has weathered what's been called The Great Recession.

Woodhouse credited the company's success partly to what it hasn't done and that is slash prices, something competitors have been eager to do. "Once you devalue something, you're digging a big hole and it's tough to get out of that," said Woodhouse, who has been CEO since 2001.

Instead of getting "caught up in price warfare," Woodhouse said Cracker Barrel has focused on one of its central tenets of its brand, honest value. "We are not depending on anything happening in the economy, other than the day-to-day business of treating our guests right," Woodhouse said.

Obviously it is working; such efforts have been recognized by patrons. A recent consumer survey conducted by Technomic, Inc., rated Cracker Barrel at the top of the list of national full-service restaurants. In the study, 4,000 respondents rated Cracker Barrel more favorably than competitors like Applebee's, Olive Garden and Red Lobster, among others.

One last observation, Cracker Barrel made \$14.4 million in the last quarter, up 20% from last year.

To Swipe or Not To Swipe

About eighteen months ago I reported that at least half dozen full service operators in the Greater Detroit area were offering sizable discounts to guests who paid cash in lieu of using credit cards. You will recall that the Greater Detroit area was then reeling from the deep drop in sales of cars and the status of the industry itself was very iffy. When questioned by the press as to how they, the operators, could operate with this amount of lost gross sales, most of them stated that they realized they were just trading dollars, but they were willing to do anything to stay afloat. I should also tell you that according to the operators, only about 20 % of the guests elected to pay in cash.

Well, The New York Post recently ran a story reporting that "cash is king" at local restaurants and bars struggling with a tight economy and small profit margins. Those in the know say the trend is growing. Veteran restaurant consultant Michael Whitman

continued page 4

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Sampson Continued...

said, "It definitely feels like it's more of an accepted practice now. You notice it more and more. When times get tough, restaurateurs look to cut costs."

A customer reported being aggravated to discover a famous pizzeria was cash only. An ATM machine outside charged a \$4.50 fee, which the guest refused to pay. Some cash-only spots have ATMs on site and staffers point patrons to them. The bar and the restaurant profit from the transaction fees. The article went on to point out that while straight cash offers financial benefits, there are potential pitfalls. The Internal Revenue Service homes in on cash-only businesses. "I think it's pretty well-established that the IRS is particularly interested cash-only businesses, including restaurants," said Manhattan tax attorney Allen Pearlman.

I would agree with Mr. Pearlman; it is my observation after dealing with sales tax issues on behalf of the industry for over 40 years, cash-only businesses do attract ALL revenue auditors.

Industry Contraction Continues

The number of restaurants in the United States has fallen by 5204 units, a one per cent decline from the total number of eateries recorded in the spring of 2009, according to The NPD Group.

For the 12 months ended March 31, the number of quick service restaurants declined by 2512, locations and the number of full-service restaurants fell by 2683 units, resulting in a one per cent decrease overall for both segments. Within those sectors, independents fared worse than competitors, the NPD found. In fast food, chains lost only 164 net independent locations to remain flat for the 12-month period while independent quick-service restaurants lost 2685 net units, a three per cent decrease for that time period.

Independent and chain full-service restaurants both logged one per cent declines in unit counts for the 12-month time frame, with independents restaurants shedding 2408 total units and chains dropping 275 net locations.

These are truly tough times!

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George Schaeffer

Anderson's Explosion

It's a hot and humid Saturday afternoon. I was tending the usual outdoor chores after a week of "pushing the pill up the hill."

Our big item back then was a liquid shortening called Mel Fry. While Durkee was diverse in many food areas, Mel Fry paid the bills in sheer volume. Our objective was not only to sell the Mom & Pop operations, but to sell local chains and large volume single accounts. No big surprise in that theory. Anyway, we knew Anderson's was a high volume drive in on Sheridan Drive and was going to grow. We set our sites in securing their deep fry oil business. Anyone who has done salesmanship #101 knows the effort it takes to get a successful operator to change anything. Anderson's was quite happy using a competitors product for years and for us to get them to switch was a monumental task. Never take "no" for an answer, 4 color literature, deep fry thermometers, filtering devices, rhetorical questions, personal guarantees, success stories, persistence, all wrapped up in a hefty coupon finally got them to try our superior Mel Fry product, with reluctance.

So here I am, mowing the lawn and my wife shouts out the door; "Someone at Anderson's wants to talk to you!" I think it's noon on Saturday, "why would they be calling me?" Rushing to the phone, (in those days all phones had cords) I hear a manager screaming that this new Mel Fry blew up in their fryer. Thankfully, no one was hurt but they had quite a mess. They wanted me over there, NOW. They wanted to get their old product back and put a can of Mel Fry where the sun doesn't shine! He was hotter than the 350° fryer. I arrive at the store and there is a line out the door. They are jammed. The new help is in a frenzy and one young kid is mopping up the spilled grease. The orders are coming in by the dozen. The manager, who is also a young lad, probably had one more season under his belt than the rest of the help, is having an apoplexy. Trying to stay calm, cool and collected on my part was not an easy chore. I assured him that I never heard of "exploding Mel Fry." There was nothing in Mel Fry that would or could "blow up." Then I observed the problem.

The young fry cook who was manning the fryers was jammed with orders. He was loading the fresh cut shoe string potatoes in the baskets to the hilt. What he did was jam the potatoes in the basket and one or two baskets had a big air pocket in it. 350° oil, wet potatoes, and a **KA-POW!**



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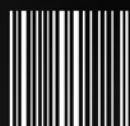
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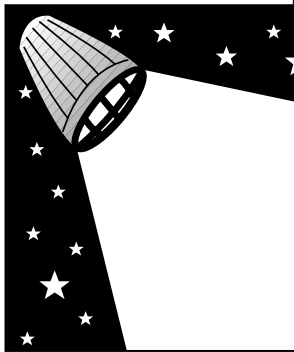
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Western New York Chapter 2010 ~ 2011 **Benefits Bash!**

What: a casual get together to see some of the cost savings programs and specials that membership in NYSRA has to offer

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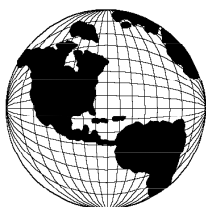
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