

# Eating Well

Marian Burros

**W**ASHINGTON, Jan. 3 — Roast squab with port wine sauce; grilled chicken breast with white bean, fennel and escarole salad; braised salmon on a bed of barley and white rice: hardly Spartan dishes, yet they are part of a program for people who want to eat healthful but elegant food when they dine out.

The program, Dining With Washington Heart, is sponsored by the Washington Hospital Center. Twenty-two restaurants have joined, agreeing to submit proposed "Dining With" dishes for review by the hospital center and the program's creator, Joyce Winslow, a former food writer and cordon bleu student who is an associate professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh.

Ms. Winslow began the program several years ago in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., when her father had a heart attack. "I surveyed the patients in my father's rehab unit," Ms. Winslow recalled in a telephone interview. "They were type-A people who had always gone to restaurants but stopped because they were afraid to eat anything wrong and were embarrassed to negotiate their meal with some insensitive waiter."

Ms. Winslow researched heart patients' nutritional needs and desires, and approached restaurants and a hospital in Fort Lauderdale, asking them to participate in an experiment. That was the start of Dining With.

Today, Dining With programs can also be found in New Jersey (Burlington County, Cherry Hill and Camden), in Pennsylvania (Philadelphia and Pittsburgh) and in Fort Wayne, Ind. Each is affiliated with a medical center and is advised by Ms. Winslow, who copyrighted the Dining With name. Last week she sold the concept and name to Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia, which, she said, plans to franchise the program. She said she continued to advise programs now in operation.

Under Ms. Winslow's plan, participating restaurants may incorporate heart-healthy fare into their regular menus or they may create separate menus. They are expected to display a sign announcing their membership in the program, though not all do so.

Some restaurants, like Hamburger Hamlet, a small chain with outlets in the Washington area, said the special menu was a burden on the staff. At the Bethesda, Md., outlet recently, a waiter was accommodating but the kitchen obviously was not accustomed to preparing such meals.

But other Washington restaurants are warming to Dining With. Amarjeet Singh, the owner of one, New Heights, said, "Logistically, it has worked out quite well for us."

The hospital said that since the program began last June, 18,000 people have taken free memberships in

## Special dishes for healthful dining out.

the Dining With Washington Heart Club. Each received a card listing participating restaurants. What do the restaurants get? Possibly greater patronage. But mainly restaurateurs say they are doing something useful.

Roberto Donna, owner and chef of Galileo, the city's premier Italian restaurant, said, "Every restaurant should have at least one or two such dishes."

Galileo has many more than that. A few nights ago there were two appetizers, two soups, three pastas and a risotto. Mr. Donna said the kitchen would grill any game bird, veal or beef and serve it with a low-fat, low-cholesterol sauce. There were also seven kinds of grilled fish.

Though there are not as many choices at New Heights, whose chef, Melissa Ballinger, features American cooking, the food is imaginative: shiitake mushroom and wild rice soup; grilled chicken breast with white beans and barbecue sauce, and grilled tuna with tomato-horseradish sauce.

The response to the Dining With menu has not been as great as Ms. Ballinger and Mr. Singh had expected — not even when the American Heart Association met here. "Many of the doctors came here to eat," Mr. Singh said, "but only two ordered from the menu." He estimates that 10 percent of his patrons order from the Dining

With menu; the estimate is about the same at Galileo.

Leslie Blakey, owner of Le Caprice, said 10 to 15 percent of her patrons ordered Dining With items — but then, Le Caprice has a card about the program attached to each menu.

"Few people come in with the membership card," Ms. Blakey said, "but they see the information and they ask." Her menu includes a satisfying fish soup, a lean but tender steak with ratatouille, poached salmon and grilled swordfish.

Hamburger Hamlet had run out of its special salad one night last week. The grilled chicken was very dry, although the salsa accompanying it was excellent. The Hotsburger, a lean hamburger, was acceptable.

Barbara Oliver, the project coordinator at Washington Hospital Center, said the hospital saw its role in Dining With as "a way to talk to well people," and added, "It puts our name out there in a positive light."