

# INSTITUTIONS



Heart patients can order steamed lobster with blue prawns at The Melrose.

## ■ HOSPITALS

### Cardiac Patients Warm to Heart-Healthy Program

Dining out with clear conscience is easy, as hospitals and restaurants team up to offer healthful fare.

A local news crew was on hand to film Joyce Winslow, founder and president of the Dining With Heart© program, as she discussed a menu with Chef Edmund Foltzenlogel of Le Caprice restaurant in Washington, D.C. At one point, Winslow told Foltzenlogel that one ingredient would have to be removed from a recipe in order to comply with the dietary guidelines of her program.

Foltzenlogel stood and, reverting to French, passionately argued that to remove the ingredient was to destroy the very essence of the dish. Winslow responded, "The frustration you feel right now is the very same feeling heart patients have every time they look at

your menu."

The point was well taken by Foltzenlogel, who, along with 26 other Washington, D.C.-area restaurants, has joined the Dining With Washington Heart© program. In collaboration with Washington Hospital Center HeartCare unit in Washington, D.C., the restaurants provide heart-healthy menu selections not only to cardiac patients but to the general public.

In five cities across the country, hospitals are working with local restaurants to establish Dining With Heart© programs. Winslow consults with each hospital's chief of cardiology and director of nutrition to set dietary guidelines for participating restaurants to

follow. Dietary guidelines vary from hospital to hospital, but are within a given nutritional framework.

Winslow created the Dining With Heart© program after her father suffered a heart attack in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., in 1980 (Winslow is a former Cordon Bleu student who has taught at two cooking schools and has written extensively about food for well-known consumer publications). Conversations with cardiac patients in her father's unit and research into hospital surveys revealed that 60% of heart patients had stopped dining out altogether.

According to Winslow, many patients wish to avoid making medical conditions public, or, if they do make requirements known, the wait staff cannot disclose ingredients to patients' satisfaction. In many cases, dishes in keeping with patients' dietary needs were simply not available.

In the Dining With Heart© program, healthful alternatives are offered to cardiac patients. Winslow approaches hospitals with the program and, if the idea is acceptable, is hired to meet with restaurants in the area and set the program in motion. The hospitals are responsible for advertising the program in newspapers and magazines, for printing lists of participating restaurants and for distributing special membership cards that patrons show to servers. Winslow reports that there are 18,000 Dining With Heart© members at this time.

Each participating restaurant agrees to offer several heart-healthy choices of appetizers, entrees, salads and desserts either on a separate menu, asterisked on the regular menu or simply mentioned by the server. Many of the menu entries—low in sodium, fat and cholesterol—are new and innovative recipes created specifically for the restaurant by the chef and Winslow.

Winslow meets with each chef participating in the program and goes over the individual menus. She looks at the type of cuisine the restaurant serves, standard inventory, the availability of low-sodium, low-fat and low-cholesterol product alternatives from distributors and the ability of the cooking staff to make the special menu selections.

In developing recipes, Winslow also tutors chefs on good nutrition. "You would be surprised at how little many great chefs know about nutrition," says Winslow. "At the Cordon Bleu, we

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The program, 18,000 members strong, succeeds because it works within a restaurant's framework.

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were trained in technique; nutrition never really played a part."

In the Dining With Heart® program, nutrition and technique come together. For example, herbs are used to flavor more often than salt; sauces made from reduced stocks replace cream-based sauces; sautéing is done with margarine and stock instead of butter; and meat, poultry and seafood are grilled, steamed or broiled. Winslow tells chefs which foods are nutritionally acceptable and which are not.

The resulting recipes, which one might expect to be limited in range, are surprisingly creative. Participating restaurants report that 15% to 18% of sales are generated by the Dining With Heart®-approved selections, proof positive that meals that are good for consumers are good tasting as well.

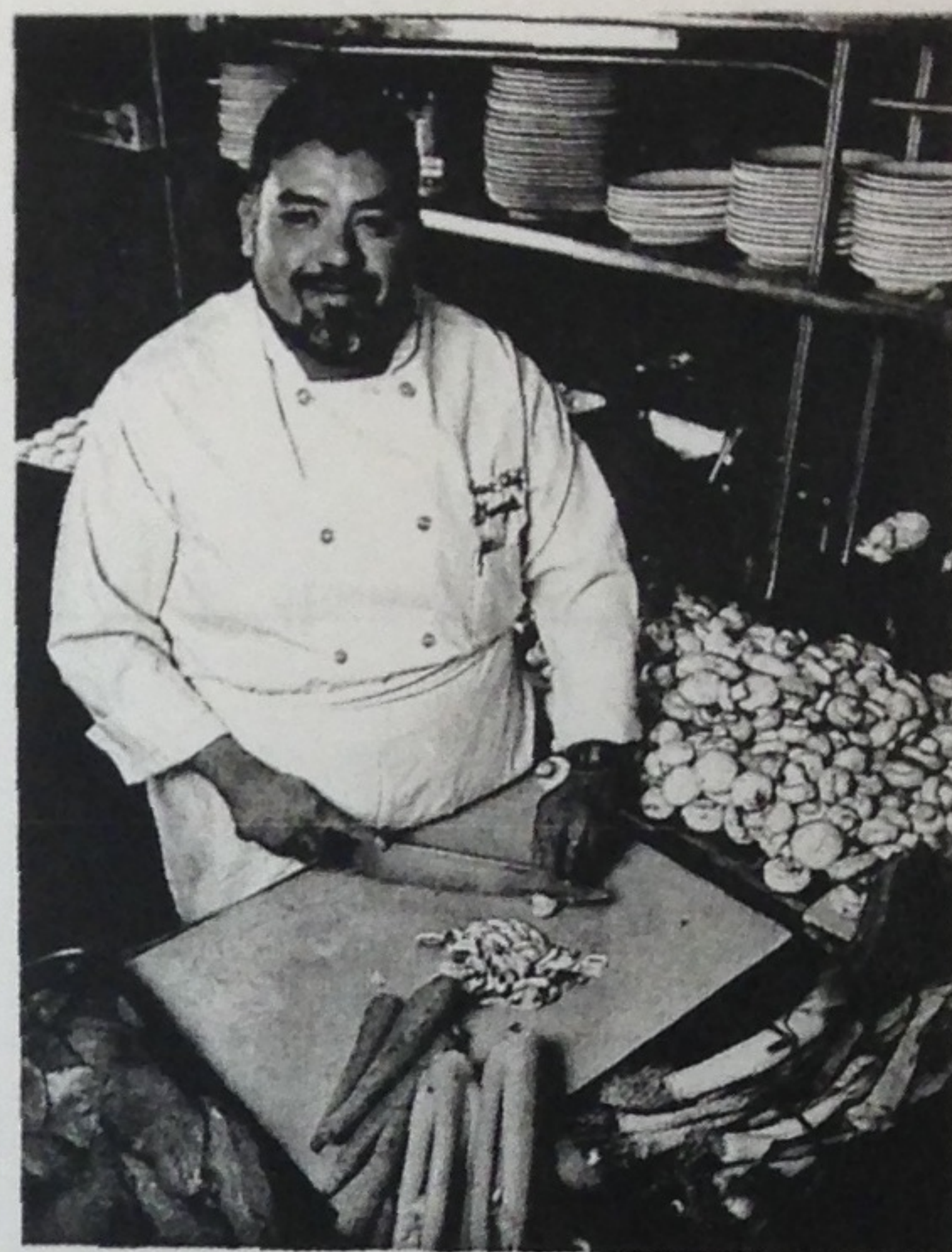
Kenneth Juran, executive chef of The Melrose restaurant in Washington, had no problem creating tasty gourmet selections for his menu. Among the top sellers are such entrees as grilled salmon marinated and basted with a sauce of cognac, honey, ginger and scallions; and skinless, grilled chicken salad served with fresh green beans, tomatoes, new red potatoes and native wild greens with a rice-wine basil dressing. At The Melrose about 25%

of the lunchtime sales come from the Dining With Heart® menu.

"The reason our program works is because I am aware of what a restaurant can and cannot do in terms of preparation," says Winslow. "The problem with many of these types of programs is that the creators expect the restaurant, and more importantly, the diner, to adhere to these incredibly strict dietary guidelines, guidelines that many patients could barely follow at home, let alone while dining out," she says. In other words, even if the restaurant could comply with the dietary requirements, the customer, in all likelihood, would not order from a special menu anyway.

Making sure patrons know that healthful alternatives are offered often falls into the hands of the wait staff. For that reason, Winslow trains all shifts (on an ongoing basis, because of frequent turnover) on the finer points of selling the healthful selections. She holds seminars on how to be sensitive to the needs of heart patients and instills a basic understanding of nutrition, which helps the server in conveying information.

"It's a delicate business," says Winslow of the presentation. For example, she says, many heart patients will have a healthful appetizer, soup



**Chef Gary Barone of Gary's Restaurant in Washington, D.C., prepares vegetables for a heart-healthy entree.**

and entree, and then ruin the healthful meal by ordering a chocolate mousse. Winslow tells the server to gently suggest, "If you'd like, I could get you a little taste of the mousse to have with our raspberry sorbet." In some cases, patrons agree; in others, they will not be swayed. Winslow emphasizes that such suggestions should be made once and then immediately dropped.

In general, the potential for repeat business is high. Winslow stresses to servers that cardiac patients are loyal customers because their choices for dining out are limited. And tips are usually more generous because the patient is delighted at being able to dine out and stay within dietary strictures.

The program has done so well that, in December, Thomas Jefferson Hospital in Philadelphia bought the copyright to the program. Winslow continues to act as president on those accounts established or in negotiation before the sale.

Winslow, who is now an associate professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh, has begun a new program, which she says is a streamlined program that will be marketed directly to restaurants and restaurant associations. The new program is geared toward wellness in general, as opposed to cardiac needs alone, and is extremely easy to implement, says Winslow.

—Beth Gotschall

## MEMBERSHIP CARD

Washington Heart, HeartCare at the Washington Hospital Center, Washington, DC, heartily endorses

(please sign your name)

for membership in



**Membership cards for the program are given to discharged heart patients by the Washington Hospital Center.**