NEW FOOD '95

A journey into Greater Cincinnati's newest dining spots

BY LILIA F. BRADY

Zodiac. Teak. Ambar India. Caprese Italian. Hotel Mexico. Pelican Reef. Cantina del Rio. Fuddruckers. Johnny Rockets. Max & Erma's.

If you've never heard of these eateries—just a few of the spots new to the Greater Cincinnati restaurant scene in the past year—then you need our 1995 *Dining Guide*. Here's a quick overview of the sixty or so new places, plus what we've lost in 1994:

Thai one on at Zodiac Fine Chinese & Thai Cuisine in Alexandria, or at Teak in Mt. Adams. Teak, only a few months old, occupies the old HotCienda's space and is managed by Bret Michaud, whose family is part owner of the popular China Town downtown.

Go for Vietnamese at Song Phung in Terrace Park (the former China Garden Gourmet), now operated by the Le family (you know them from Song Long in Roselawn). Specializing in Vietnamese and Chinese dishes.

Other new ethnics include Ambar India (the former Ulysses) in Clifton, offering Tandoori and vegetarian specialties. Fernando's Casa is the old Sylvia's in Newport, serving Mexican and—now that it's newly remodeled with a dance floor—offering live entertainment till the wee hours. At Amigo's in West Chester, the Leal and Rodriquez families boast 100 percent authentic Mexican fare.

Looking to the east side, the old Alessandro's in Mt. Lookout is now Betta's Italian Cuisine. A welcome addition to Hyde Park dining is the Melting Pot, a fondue restaurant at the old Zino's on the Square; also Cooker Bar & Grille and First Wok at the Plaza. In O'Bryonville, Toni Davena and Mary McMahon open What's for Dinner, creative and reasonably priced gourmet food. Cafe Joseph-Beth opens at Rookwood Pavilion in Norwood, Four Seasons Marina Restaurant (formerly Auggie's) in Columbia-Tusculum and Pelican Reef in Anderson Township.

Downtown and uptown: Joining the scene are Seafood 32 (formerly the Top of the Crown) and Elm Street Grill (the old Zaks) at Regal Cincinnati Hotel. Bacchus on Seventh owner Maurice Loeb takes over the old Boot and renames it Bacchus on Vine. (Eggplant Charlotte is exceptional here.) And Compadres on Elm is now Merl's Eatery. In Corryville, David Bailey and Michael Cohen spiff up Zino's Cafe and call it Firehouse on Vine.

A renaissance in Over-the-Rhine. Kaldi's, Courtyard Cafe, Japp's/Stow's and the new Main Street Brewery, the city's only brewpub, are attracting a fresh clientele. When a

Teak in Mt. Adams offers Thai cuisine.

PHOTOS BY JOHN STAMSTAD
ON THE COVER: ARNOLD'S CAFE, BY JACQUELINE R. FLISCHEL