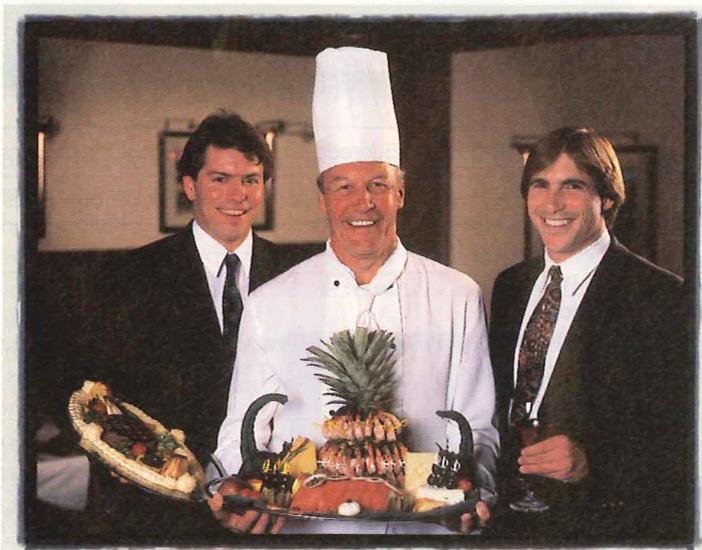


the Readers have Spoken

A N D C H E W E D

by Stan Sauerwein



Glen Durrell

For three decades now the Vintage Room has been an Okanagan dining tradition. It is now officially the Readers' Choice for Best Restaurant. Maitre d' Bart Dorssers (left), Chef Helge and restaurants and outlets manager, Greg Capozzi.

As vessels for a miraculous spirit, there is one simple trait that makes us uniquely human. It's food. Cross off an opposable thumb, our invention of a just society, or crossword puzzles, and what else sets us apart from other living creatures? We adore our food, dressed with wispy herbal accents, drenched in sauces to delight and intrigue, presented in sprays of colour on everything from fine china to plastic plates. With just the slightest encouragement we're capable of speaking for hours about food and our favourite eating experiences.

BEST RESTAURANT SURVEY RESULTS

BEST RESTAURANT IN VALLEY

① Vintage Dining Room

② Country Squire Inn

③ Hotel Eldorado

HM La Bussola

HM Swiss Italia

BEST SOUTH OKANAGAN RESTAURANT

① Country Squire Inn

② Granny Bogner's

③ Earls On Top

HM Theo's

BEST NORTH OKANAGAN RESTAURANT

① Courtyard Garden

② Earls On Top (Tie)

② Intermezzo

③ Demetre's Steak House (Tie)

③ Greek House

HM Boa Thong

BEST SERVICE

① Vintage Dining Room

② Guisachan House (Tie)

② Williams Inn

③ Hotel Eldorado

HM Country Squire Inn

BEST ATMOSPHERE

① Hotel Eldorado

② Vintage Dining Room

③ Guisachan House

HM Chateau Dining Room

HM Dolphins

HM Swiss Italia

BEST PIZZA

① Pizza Hut

② Boston Pizza

③ joey tomato's

HM Breadeaux Pizza

BEST BURGERS

① Burger Baron

② White Spot

③ PJ's All Star Cafe

HM Dairy Queen

(HM — Honorable Mention)

BEST STEAK

- ① **The Keg**
- ② **Vintage Dining Room**
- ③ **Cattle Country Steak & Seafood (Tie)**
- ③ **Christopher's Steak & Seafood**

HM Hotel Eldorado

BEST SEAFOOD

- ① **Joey's Only Seafood**
- ② **Hotel Eldorado (Tie)**
- ② **Dolphins**
- ③ **Christopher's Steak & Seafood**

HM Lord Chumley

BEST RIBS

- ① **Earls On Top**
- ② **Adel's Creekside Pub & Ribhouse**
- ③ **Swiss Chalet**

HM Boston Pizza

BEST VEGETARIAN SELECTION

- ① **de Montreuil**
- ② **Bonanza**
- ③ **Haven (Tie)**
- ③ **joey tomato's**

HM Bunches Bistro

BEST APPETIZERS

- ① **Kelly O'Bryan's**
- ② **Country Squire Inn**
- ③ **Hotel Eldorado (Tie)**
- ③ **The Keg**

HM Adel's Creekside Pub

BEST DESSERTS

- ① **Cheesecake Cafe**
- ② **Guisachan House**
- ③ **Hotel Eldorado (Tie)**
- ③ **Vintage Dining Room**

HM joey tomato's

HM Dolphins

BEST LIGHT & HEALTHY

- ① **Bunches Bistro**
- ② **Bohemian Bagel Cafe**
- ③ **White Spot**

HM de Montreuil

BEST ASIAN

- ① **Mon Thong**
- ② **Mekong**
- ③ **Chinese Laundry**

HM Asian Garden

The Okanagan has a better than average mix of terrific dining establishments. *Okanagan Life* turned to its readers to rank the best of the best and has compiled the first Readers' Choice of their favourites in 35 different categories.

In most cases, your choices and ours matched but many readers threw dining curves that are sure to surprise many a Valley gastronome.

Chef Helge, taking overall top honours for the Best in the Valley, wasn't one of them. Justifiably, under Helge Brandstatter's direction, the Vintage Dining Room at the Coast Capri has become famous during the last 33 years. Under normal conditions, the menu at the Vintage Dining Room carries 50 items but there are more than 100 special menu choices. To be fair to the many other 'stars', it's hard to beat that variety.

The Vintage Dining Room also took top standings in Best Service, Best Hotel Restaurant, Best Place to Celebrate, Best Wine Selection, and the Most Romantic spot to dine. When it comes to wine, Chef Helge takes pride in his cellar.

Every Okanagan winery is included and each month a different one gets a featured place in the candlelight.

The cosy Country Squire was no surprise in second place either. As the top choice in the South Okanagan, Pat Dyck and her husband Ron have made the Country Squire a special destination in Naramata for the last 15 years. When full during its single evening sittings, you share space with only 32 others. Five course dinners are graciously served at a civilized pace. You can anticipate an evening of dining pleasure including breaks between courses that give you a chance to stroll in

the grounds near the restaurant, or just relax in undisturbed conversation.

Chef Brian and the Hotel Eldorado achieve distinction in many different categories in our readers' eyes, with a close third place as the Best in the Valley. They win as the dining spot with the best atmosphere.

The ambience on the lakeshore and Maitre'd Paul Jones' professional demeanor make a visit to the 20-room Inn an experience to savour. The Hotel Eldorado operates on the philosophy that attire doesn't restrict taste buds. You can order from any of their three menus in all of the Hotel's dining spots. If you decide to venture down Lakeshore for an evening with Chef Brian, consider the Hotel Eldorado's



The Hotel Eldorado is a favourite spot for readers, both as the Best Place To Take Out-Of-Town Guests and for their Sunday Brunch.



Chef Grant de Montreuil shows his pleasure at winning the Reader's Choice as Best Vegetarian Selection with de Montreuil on Bernard.



signature dish — Jasmine Rice. The spicy dish beautifully marries mussels, prawns, Digby scallops, curry and papaya with jasmine rice. You'd be hard pressed to find a similar delight anywhere else.

What of the north? The Courtyard Garden at the Best Western was your choice, although Earl's and Intermezzo were close ties for second selection.

Where should one go for the best coffee? Only open in the Valley for two months, the victory wreath goes to Starbucks, the Seattle java meisters. Perks still ranks as a close second when it comes to variety and taste. Together the two coffee bars raked in more than half the votes in this category, followed by the Bohemian Bagel.

For dessert there was no contest in our readers' estimation. Cheesecake Cafe clobbered their competition with their rich selection. (A surprise considering the fare at the Guisachan House, Vintage Dining Room, Dolphins, and the Hotel Eldorado!)

With or without chopsticks, the choice for Asian food is Mon Thong, though a close second was registered with Mekong. The Chinese Laundry, which first made its appearance on the dining horizon so successfully in Peachland and now is also located in Kelowna and Penticton, followed in third spot.

We'd like to know the reader who suggested that the Best Place to Take Out-of-Towners for dinner was Butterfly World. Was that an oblique reference to the in-laws? Was Ogoopogo reading the magazine again? Delectable pupae aside, most readers think the lakeside ambience of the Hotel Eldorado rated tops as a visit capper for out-of-towners.

The Finer Choice is the Best Kept dining secret in the The famous Burger Baron Burger. They were also selected as the best spot for fast food in the Okanagan.



The selection of dishes at Mon Thong makes for a dining experience that delights and intrigues. Mon Thong took the Reader's Choice for Best Asian Restaurant.



A picturesque drive in the country to get to the Chateau Dining Room will reward you with what readers claim is one of the best Sunday Brunches to be found.

BEST EUROPEAN

- ① Swiss Italia
- ② Suisse Marmite
- ③ Guisachan House

HM Gasthaus on the Lake
HM Williams Inn

BEST BREAKFAST

- ① I.H.O.P.
- ② Denny's
- ③ Smitty's

HM Lena's Pancake House

BEST POWER LUNCH

- ① Kelly O'Bryan's
- ② Bunches Bistro
- ③ Divino's Cafe

HM Earls On Top

BEST SUNDAY BRUNCH

- ① Chateau Dining Room (Tie)
- ① Hotel Eldorado
- ② Dolphins
- ③ Vintage Dining Room

HM Harvest Dining Room

BEST COFFEE HOUSE/BISTRO

- ① Starbucks
- ② Perks Coffee Co.
- ③ Bohemian Bagel Cafe

HM Bunches Bistro

BEST HOTEL RESTAURANT

- ① Vintage Dining Room
- ② Hotel Eldorado
- ③ Dolphins

HM Chateau Dining Room

BEST PLACE TO CELEBRATE

- ① Vintage Dining Room
- ② Hotel Eldorado
- ③ The Keg

HM Kelly O'Bryan's

BEST PLACE TO TAKE OUT-OF-TOWNERS

- ① Hotel Eldorado
- ② Earls On Top
- ③ Fintry Queen Dining Room (Tie)
- ③ Vintage Dining Room

HM Harvest Dining Room

MOST CREATIVE MENU

- ① Kelly O'Bryan's
- ② Hotel Eldorado
- ③ Finer Choice

HM Red Robin

BEST WINE SELECTION

- ① Vintage Dining Room
- ② Country Squire Inn (Tie)
- ② Williams Inn
- ③ La Bussola

HM Hotel Eldorado

HM Swiss Italia

BEST PLACE TO EAT AND HEAR LIVE MUSIC

- ① Swiss Italia
- ② Bunches Bistro
- ③ Kitchen Cowboy

HM Coyote's

BEST CASUAL RESTAURANT

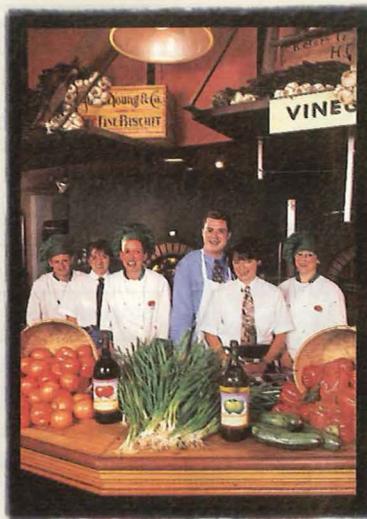
- ① joey tomato's (Tie)
- ① PJ's Allstar Cafe
- ② Earls On Top
- ③ Kelly O'Bryan's

HM Cheesecake Cafe

BEST PLACE TO TAKE THE WHOLE FAMILY

- ① White Spot
- ② Uncle Willy's Buffet
- ③ Red Robin

HM joey tomato's



Glen Durrell

It's a staff affair at joey tomato's sharing the laurels for the Best Casual Restaurant in the Valley with PJ's Allstar Cafe.

Okanagan, but readers also suggest a trip to the Chateau Dining Room on the west side of the lake.

For the best Power Lunch, readers suggested Kelly O'Bryan's with Bunches Bistro a close second. Kelly O'Bryan's was Numero Uno for appetizers as well, and menu collectors claimed it had the most creative menu presentation in the Valley. Hmmm. We'd guess that more business documents can be expected to sport the odd splashes of Hot Wings sauce after this issue hits the stands.

The restaurant listings now appearing in every issue of *Okanagan Life* do not include neighbourhood pubs, but our readers advise us that the best pub grub can be had at McCulloch Station.

For great outdoor dining, consider Earl's for the best patio in the Valley, though the view and the fare at Coyote's/Rose's are apt contenders in our view.

The sandwich board sign on Hwy 97 says it all for the readers on a hamburger hunt.

When time is of the essence, readers believe you can get the best fast food and best burger at Kelowna's Burger Baron. When you've got the whole family out for dinner, head to the White Spot, but if value is your first concern you may want to go to Uncle Willy's.

Speaking of meat our readers picked The Keg for the best in steak and Earls if



△ ENJOY OUR FABULOUS △
VIEWS OF △ OKANAGAN LAKE
WITH THE △ DELICIOUS
FLAVOURS OF △ SESZCHUAN
CUISINE LIKE OUR △ SIZZLING
PLATTERS OR △ GINGER
CHICKEN △



223 BERNARD AVENUE △ KELOWNA
RESERVATIONS △ 763-2238



ENHANCE YOUR LIVING ENVIRONMENT

· FASHION · ACCESSORIES · FURNITURE ·
· ANTIQUES · HOME ACCENTS & GIFTS ·



The Discovery Store
Shop The World



1579 & 1585 Pandosy Street, Downtown Kelowna. 862-5959

you have a hankering for ribs.

We remember chowing down on the fish and chips on 17th Avenue in Calgary, when the tiny Cowtown eatery there was the only Joey's Only. As a successful restaurant chain, Joey's Only has made a popular mark on the dining landscape here too and earned reader approval as the best for seafood.

Crust first? Why not! Our readers say Pizza Hut has the best pizzas but Boston Pizza and joey tomato's weren't far behind.

Joey tomato's is also "the place" when readers want something casual or an eating adventure.

The best spot for eating and listening to live music is the Swiss Italia. Swiss Italia also ranks first for European-style cuisine.

For breakfast, readers say IHOP is tops except for Sundays when a special brunch is in order. They recommend a visit to the Chateau Dining Room or the Hotel Eldorado in that case.

Sifting through the ballots gave us a chance to offer a few dining tips as well.

Check out the restaurants in Summerland. We think some unique and tasty dining experiences are hidden away there.

If they stick to their format and quality, we predict that de Montreuil will become another "in spot" for diners in search of vegetarian or healthy food.

We're sure the chefs and restaurateurs will appreciate the time *Okanagan Life* readers took to rate their favourites. Try these restaurants and see if you agree or disagree.

As an added service, Restaurant listings will become a regular feature section in every issue of *Okanagan Life* throughout the year. Check the listings starting on page 26 if you'd like to make any dining reservations.

OLM

Dinner Winners



Many, many, MANY entry forms later, the staff at **Okanagan Life** finally drew the two lucky winners to our summer issue's restaurant contests. Leaving a message on Lucky Winner #1, Craig Inouye's answering machine, all we could say was, "We have good news for you — call us when you get in." Guess what? Craig called back in a hurry. Gerry Lee, Sales Manager of **Okanagan Life**, had the pleasure of giving the good news — 23 Meals of a Lifetime to some of the Valley's finest restaurants. Well, Craig must have been so excited about winning that he missed the most important detail of all. It was only at the photo shoot two days later that we discovered he thought he only won ONE gift certificate!

Nelson Scott, winner #2, came next. This time, **Okanagan Life**'s Copy Editor, Anita Czombos, had the advantage of announcing the good news — dinner to the top three ranked in the "Best Restaurant in the Valley" category of our Reader Poll. After the initial surprise, the first thing a very appreciative Nelson asked was, "So, where do I claim my prize?" Isn't that the first question everyone asks when they win ANYthing? Except for maybe, "What's the catch?"



BEST MEAL FOR THE MONEY

- ① Uncle Willy's Buffet
- ② Cheesecake Cafe
- ③ Finer Choice (Tie)
- ③ joey tomato's

HM Carmelle's

HM Red Robin

BEST EATING ADVENTURE

- ① joey tomato's
- ② Mon Thong
- ③ Casa Margaritas (Tie)
- ③ Country Squire Inn

HM O-Zeki

BEST PATIO DINING

- ① Earls On Top
- ② Coyote's (Tie)
- ② Hotel Eldorado
- ③ Rose's Waterfront Pub

HM Williams Inn

MOST ROMANTIC

- ① Vintage Dining Room
- ② Chateau Dining Room (Tie)
- ② Hotel Eldorado
- ③ Williams Inn

HM Carmelle's

HM Swiss Italia

BEST PUB GRUB

- ① McCulloch Station Pub
- ② Pheasant & Quail
- ③ Rose's Waterfront Pub

HM RJ McMasters

BEST FAST FOOD

- ① Burger Baron
- ② Subway
- ③ Arby's

HM McDonalds

BEST KEPT SECRET

- ① Finer Choice
- ② Chateau Dining Room
- ③ Little Texas Steakhouse (Tie)
- ③ Mama Rosa
- ③ Williams Inn

HM The Historic 1912

HM de Montreuil

In our case, there was no catch. We held a contest and we asked our readers who they thought was the Valley's culinary cream-of-the-crop. We got the results, and two lucky winners got dinners — lots of them! And thanks to everyone who took the time to fill out our restaurant poll, we came up with the results seen on pages 21 through 25 which will help YOU choose the best restaurants next time you're looking to dine out. Bon Appetit!