

Columnists

[Columnists RSS Feed](#) [e-mail headlines](#) [Text alerts](#) [On your PDA](#)

JUMP TO SITE INDEX

Print Email Comment Read Comments Text Size: [A](#) [A](#) [A](#) [Save and Share](#)

Thursday, August 27, 2009

Molly Abraham

Fine restaurants pare down portions, prices, but keep the quality



When Small Plates opened in 2002 and debuted its menu of appetizer-sized portions, it was the first local restaurant to tap into what has become a national trend.

Now upper-case Small Plates has been joined by a lot of lower-case small plates as restaurants across the board are realizing that sharable appetizers, smaller portions and even half-pours of wine are not only appealing to a lot of diners, but are also a way to entice price-conscious customers through the doors during the economic downturn.

Happy hours, formerly the domain of cheese sticks and wing-dings, have gotten positively elegant in places like Fleming's Prime Steakhouse, where it's possible to make a dinner out of the cocktail hour offerings of such "appetizers" as prime sirloin burgers or jumbo lump crabcakes.

Roast, in the Westin Book Cadillac, is another restaurant with gentle prices for such worthwhile happy hour dishes as mac and goat cheese, hamburgers and tacos with the house-roasted "beast of the day."

Advertisement

GET A **FREE** 7 DAY PASS TO LIFE TIME FITNESS.

Fleming's operating partner Peter Travis probably sums up the attitude of a lot of restaurateurs when he says "whether they want to spend a few bucks or a lot of bucks, we say come on in, we'd love to have you."

Fleming's will add a gourmet burger menu to its offerings on Sept. 1 -- and that's another trend that's taking hold around the country.

From Iridescence in Detroit to Bacco Ristorante in Southfield and Assaggi Mediterranean Bistro in Ferndale, high-end restaurants are reassessing their menus, with an eye on the right-hand column.

If \$26 entrees are staying in the kitchen, perhaps half-portions will fly out at \$13. And if \$12 glasses of wine are being left on the shelf, perhaps a smaller serving at \$6 will appeal.



[click to enlarge](#)

Sous-chef George Hooper prepares dishes for Salvatore Scallopini, which has added half-portions to its menu. (Ankur Dholakia / The Detroit News)

[click to view](#)

