



Restaurants' coupon program helps those in need: Restaurant Row

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Joe Crea, The Plain Dealer



John Kuntz, Plain Dealer file

The Chagrin Valley Council of Churches and area restaurants are seeing great success with a new program called Mindful Mondays, in which 10 percent of the purchase from participating restaurants goes to help the Cleveland Foodbank, above, and the Geauga County Hunger Task Force.

How great is it to be able to go out to dinner? How much nicer would it be, knowing that your indulgence could help those in need?

That idea gave rise to the **Mindful Mondays** program, sponsored by the **Chagrin Valley Council of Churches**.

"For us, it's a two-prong matter," says **the Rev. Daniel F. Schlegel**, pastor of the Church of the Holy Angels in Chagrin Falls. "First off, raising money to help others when the economy is so bad is a real challenge -- but secondly, so is the effort to raise awareness and help people think about the hungry.

"And, of course, there's the matter of helping the area restaurants, who are struggling so much these days," Schlegel adds. "We really want to support the mom-and-pop restaurants."

Mondays typically are one of the slowest days of the week for restaurants. Understanding that, organizers approached restaurant operators with a simple offer. Guests come in to dine on Mondays and bring in a coupon printed from the **website**. Ten percent of their purchase (excluding alcohol, tax and tips) is donated to the **Cleveland Foodbank** and the Geauga County Hunger Task Force.

The program launched in March. "And we've had a nice start to things," Schlegel says, with simple though concerted efforts.

Row Resources

- **Galaxy Restaurant:** 201 Park Centre Drive, Wadsworth; 330-334-3663.

An initial fundraiser among eight local businesses provided enough seed money to start the program, build a website and print materials for distribution. Soon, 15 restaurants signed on -- **Yours Truly, West End Bistro, Umami Asian Kitchen, Rick's Cafe, Raintree, Mario's Old World Pizza, Joey's, Hunan by the Falls, Gamekeeper's Taverne, Fresh Start Diner, East Washington Street Diner, Cosentino's Catering, Cafe Michael, Augie's Pizza** and **Arabica of Bainbridge**, according to Schlegel.

Some restaurants have pushed the mission vigorously; others haven't. Whatever the case, something is going right, Schlegel says.

"We recently gave checks for \$3,000 each to the Foodbank and the Geauga task force," Schlegel says. In addition to individuals, couples and families using coupons, some organizations and businesses have shifted their programs and gatherings to Monday dinner meetings.

"We've already mustered nearly \$2,000 more toward the next round of donations," Schlegel adds.

How nice would it be if your friends and families, gathering over the upcoming holidays, made it a point to support that initiative? For that matter, wouldn't it be great to hear that restaurants in other parts of town adopt such a fine gesture of generosity? I'll let you know when I hear of any.

New Japanese spot in Parma . . .

Buffet restaurants inevitably attract detractors. So be it. I recently made a midweek stop at **Kumo Japanese Seafood Buffet** on Snow Road in Parma, where the breadth of offerings came as no surprise, but many of the selections were surprisingly welcome.

A series of buffets were heaped with a wide variety of prepared Japanese, Chinese and other Asian offerings. There were also a few "American" offerings (plus a few chilled salads, fruits and the usual prefab desserts). And guests kept hauling platefuls of steamed crab legs to their tables. The well-kept buffet also featured plain, steamed mussels; grilled, mayonnaise-topped mussels; sauteed frogs' legs; steamed manila clams; giant Japanese squid rings in a teriyaki-style sauce; shell-on shrimp; large raw oysters on the half shell; and

- **Great Scott's Market & Deli:** 2216 Wooster Road, Rocky River; 440-331-3354.
- **Kumo Japanese Seafood Buffet:** 1975 Snow Road (Giant Eagle shopping center), Parma; 216-741-3038.
- **Mindful Mondays:** Before you head for dinner at any of the 15 participating Chagrin Valley restaurants, go online to print out a coupon to have 10 percent of the price of your meal (exclusive of tax, tip and alcohol) donated to the Cleveland Foodbank and the Geauga County Hunger Task Force. For a complete list of restaurants, addresses and phone numbers, and the coupon.
- **Morton's the Steakhouse:** 1600 West Second St., Cleveland (Tower City Center); 216-621-6200. Enter to win the cocktail party for 10 at the restaurant, or **enter online**.
- **Wexler's Tavern & Eatery:** 4555 State Road, Cleveland (Old Brooklyn); 216-398-5000.

three types of fish. An extensive selection of sushi rolls, nigiri and sashimi filled an icy display. A teppanyaki chef griddled the guests' choices of vegetables, seafood, chicken and meat; another chef prepared crepes, filled to order.

Who knows whether those relative luxuries will be offered in weeks to come, or on busy weekends? Still, I considered it a pleasant surprise -- and at \$13.99, it was a decent buy on a chilly Wednesday night.

Great Scott's move . . .

Ignore any brown paper on the windows: No, **Great Scott Bakery** in Rocky River hasn't closed. "We've moved our bakery operation into our deli," says pastry chef and owner **Scott Totten**. The 11-year-old bakery now operates out of **Great Scott's Market and Deli** in the space next door.

Very small bites . . .

- Looking for something to hang on to as the holiday season spins out of control? Toss your name into the hat at **Morton's the Steakhouse** in Cleveland. One lucky winner and nine of his or her friends will enjoy a post-holiday cocktail party in January. Party guests will each receive a cocktail from a selected drink menu, plus an array of appetizers, such as petit filet mignon sandwiches, crab cake BLTs and smoked salmon pizza. Visit the restaurant or enter online.
- In Wadsworth, **The Galaxy** restaurant has brought in a new executive chef, **Angus O'Hara**. A native of Youngstown, O'Hara has studied and worked in Simi Valley, Calif.; New York City; and Chicago.
- A long-popular (indeed, beloved) watering hole, **Wexler's Tavern & Eatery**, has reopened in Cleveland's Old Brooklyn neighborhood.

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