

# THE DISH

What's

By Conal Darcy

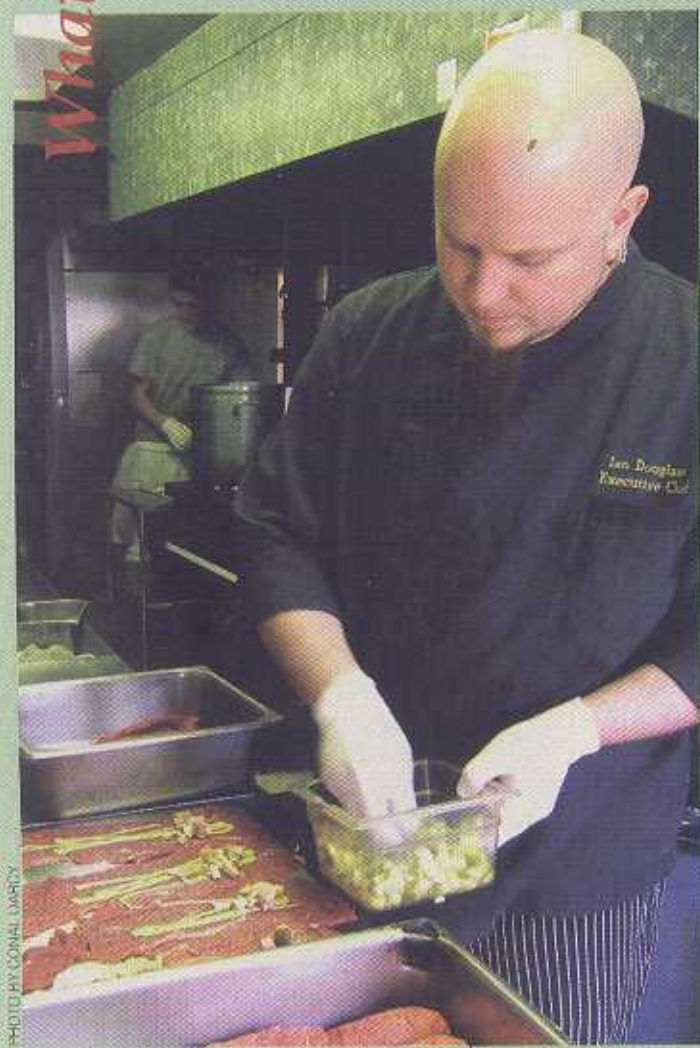


PHOTO BY CONAL DARCY

## Old Stein Inn

1143 Central Ave. (Rt. 214), Edgewater (410) 798-6807

Alongside route 214 in Mayo stands a nondescript building marked only with an aged wooden sign with a beer stein. That building, one of South County's first gas stations, houses the Old Stein Inn—a strange and wonderful alien among Annapolis restaurants.

Stepping inside transports you 8000 miles to a small *Gaststube* somewhere in southwest Germany. The low lighting and the low, ornate stamped tin ceiling framed in wood, give the visitor a sense of *gemütlichkeit*, or coziness, that is rarely found outside the walls of family-owned restaurants in Germany.

Michael Selinger and his wife Beth took over the restaurant from his German immigrant parents, Karl and Ursula, in 1995. Like Selinger's parents, the Old Stein is a transplant with solid German roots set deep and wide in fertile American soil. Since its opening in 1983, the restaurant has kept a consistent blend of German and American, taking the best from both worlds.

The menu features red cabbage and potato salad piled high next

to large portions of pork roast, Wiener schnitzel, goulash, knock-wurst, and many other gravy-covered dishes out of the heart of Germany.

While meat and potatoes, the mainstay of German food, are well represented, those looking for a light meal won't be let down at the inn. The menu also includes fine chicken, fish, and vegetable dishes. "German cuisine can be a little bit heavy," admits Selinger, "but Chef Ian [Douglass] has a more modern take." During the summer the restaurant switches to a lighter menu incorporating local ingredients and seafood.

The inn's traditional German roots nevertheless hold steady. Douglass, who was trained at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA), says, "We use the same recipes that Mike's father brought over with him" in the 1950s. When asked whether the CIA regularly included German fare in the curriculum, Douglass answers no—most everything on the menu he learned from the previous German chef.

The Old Stein does not take reservations, though it does offer 1-hour call-ahead seating on the weekends. When asked why, Selinger has a very good answer. The atmosphere in a German restaurant is very relaxed, according to him. Unlike in the United States, once you finish a meal, you stay around and enjoy the afterglow of a fine dinner.

"People take their time," says Selinger. "We never rush them. We've had some people come in at 4 and stay until 11." While 7 hours may be a tad extreme, it's not uncommon for Germans to spend 3 or 4 digesting their meal and enjoying a few beers.

The beer—of course! What would a German restaurant be without beer? The Old Stein has its bases covered with a selection of tap and bottled beer representing a wide range of German brands and styles. There's something for the wine lover, too. Only the best German estate wines are served, including the popular Riesling, a sweet white wine from the Rhein and Mosel valleys.

These libations are best enjoyed in a *biergarten*. The people of Germany have cultivated a fine appreciation of good weather due to the preponderance of rain and cold. To sit inside when the sun is shining and a cool breeze is blowing is nearly criminal. Therefore, outside seating is offered by every German restaurant with enough room; the Old Stein is no exception. A high fence encloses its rear patio, where wooden tables and sun umbrellas provide the perfect setting for idle chitchat and a fine brew.

Annapolitans should consider themselves lucky to have such a fantastic selection of food and such a great atmosphere so close by. "We're one of the few German restaurants left in this area," says Selinger. "We get people from Baltimore, D.C., and even Pennsylvania stopping by."

So what is the big secret that lures so many to the cozy confines of the Old Stein? What should patrons know before coming to dine? Selinger answers: "Nothing. Just bring your appetite and thirst" and enjoy mouthwatering German meals and drinks with friends and family.

*Conal Darcy is an editorial assistant for What's Up? Annapolis and has finally found a use for his degree in Germanic studies.*

## Rinder rolladen (Beef rolls)



For The Dish, Executive Chef Ian Douglass chose a typical and relatively simple German dish called *rinder rolladen*. Named after a type of tin rolling shutter common in Germany, this meal is hearty and delicious. It also goes well with a good German beer.

### Ingredients

- 1 thinly sliced top round of beef
- 6 carrots, cut julienne style
- 6 kosher dill pickles, diced
- 3 Spanish (yellow) onions, diced
- 3/4 pound applewood-smoked bacon, diced
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon ground pepper
- 5 tablespoons sweet Hungarian paprika
- 3 tablespoons curry powder
- 1 tablespoon nutmeg
- 1 1/2 gallon of beef stock
- German style spicy mustard in a squeeze bottle

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Trim excess fat from the beef and lay it out on a clean, flat surface. Squirt three or four lines of mustard on each slice and season with salt and pepper. Place a pinch of carrot, pickle, onion, and bacon on each slice.

Roll beef and secure it with a toothpick if necessary. Place in a baking pan and sprinkle with spices. Bake at 350° for 30 minutes. Add stock to pan and cook an additional hour.

Strain the broth into a saucepan and thicken to gravy consistency over low heat. Once ready, pour over the rolladen. A typical serving is two rolladen per plate, served with cooked red cabbage and spätzle, traditional German noodles, available at most grocery stores in the international aisle.

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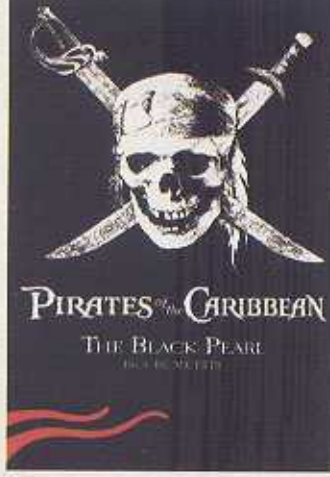


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