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American eats, European sips and sounds

Howard Seftel

The Arizona Republic
Sept. 28, 2005 12:00 AM

As the weather cools off, the dining scene is heating up. **Peter Kasperski**, the man behind the outstanding restaurant row at Stetson Drive and Sixth Avenue in Scottsdale (**Cowboy Ciao**, **Kazimierz** and **Sea Saw**), and **Jimmy Carlin**, who conceived and developed **Blue Wasabi**, have joined forces. Early in 2006, they'll debut their new concept on Market Street at DC Ranch in north Scottsdale, in the space last occupied by the Cowboy.

The operation has two components: a restaurant called the **Star Spangled Tavern**, and a luxury lounge next door called **Baroque**.

As you no doubt intuited from the name, the Star Spangled Tavern is all about celebrating American products and American cooking in an informal setting. The emphasis will be on comfort foods, traditional regional dishes, artisanal ingredients and farm-fresh produce. The preliminary menu features dishes like Berkshire pork rib-eye with smoked gouda grits, beet carpaccio, Michigan blueberry tart with lemon curd and Scharffen Berger chocolate malted custard.

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The all-American wine list will naturally focus on California, Oregon, Washington and Arizona, but you can expect to see labels from many other states. Also look for the likes of an heirloom-tomato bloody Mary and pineapple wine from Hawaii.

Baroque, meanwhile, is described as a "European-influenced

luxury lounge." That means chic cocktails, Champagne flights, trendy hors d'oeuvres and DJs spinning "Euro-grooves" and occasional live jazz. Plan to go? There's still time to work on raising your coolness quotient.

Going the extra Yard

It's not hard to find Coors, Miller and Bud in this town. It is a little more challenging to find a place with more than 100 international brewskis on tap.

But the challenge is being met at the new **Yard House**, a California outfit with nine other outlets, seven in Southern California, one in Denver and one in Chicago. ("Yard" refers to 3-foot-tall beer glasses common centuries ago in England.)

Yard House is more than a beer hall, however. The extensive menu suggests that the kitchen takes the food part of the equation seriously. Naturally, the predictable nibbles are here: nachos (\$8.95), onion rings (\$7.75), fried calamari (\$9.25), coconut shrimp (\$11.95). But munchies also include a Hawaiian poke wonton stack (\$9.95), Korean BBQ beef (\$10.95) and spicy tuna roll (\$10.75).

The menu ranges through salads (Thai chicken salad, \$12.45), burgers (Béarnaise burger, \$9.95), sandwiches (crab cake hoagie, \$12.25) and pizzas (barbecue chicken and smoked Gouda, \$11.95).

The more substantial entrees showcase pepper-crusted filet (\$28.95), New Zealand lamb chops (\$22.95), pork tenderloin (\$18.95), miso-glazed Chilean sea bass (\$23.95), crab-crusted swordfish (\$23.95) and sea scallops with orzo (\$21.95).

Look for "House Favorites," as well: chicken garlic noodles (\$13.95), turkey potpie (\$13.95) and jerk chicken with shrimp enchiladas (\$16.45).

Beers start at \$4.25 for a pint, and \$8.50 for a half-yard (32 ounces). Among the

basics, head to **cooking 201**, and be sure to watch descriptive **cooking videos** featuring noted Valley chef Jon-Paul Hutchins.

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harder-to-find suds on tap are Chimay Cinq Cent Triple from Belgium, Warsteiner Dunkel from Germany and, one of my all-time favorites, Kronenbourg 1664 from France.

Two other Valley units are in the works for 2006: one at **Scottsdale Fashion Square** scheduled for January; and one by the new Cardinals stadium, which will be ready later that fall.

Details: Yard House, 21001 N. Tatum Blvd. (Desert Ridge Marketplace), Phoenix, (480) 563-9273. Hours: 11 a.m.-11:30 p.m. Sundays through Thursdays; 11 a.m.-1:30 a.m. Fridays and Saturdays.

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