

# Michael's celebrates 20th Anniversary

Welcome mat  
always out at  
*this outstanding  
Clarkson eatery*

BY MIKE BEGGS

Twenty years is like an eternity in the restaurant business. But, Michael's Back Door in Clarkson is not only feting its 20th anniversary in 2001, it remains one of the first choices amongst the mass of restaurants that now dot the map of Mississauga.

This reporter discovered one reason why upon entering the door.

"Have you been looked after," one of the kitchen staff passing by asked immediately?

The hospitality starts with owner Michael Morra himself, who brought some Old World charm with him when left his hometown of Puglia, Italy, at the age of 17. He, his wife Anna, and their son Michael (who is manager) make a point of being around the restaurant seven days a week, creating a family vibe.

"I think it's the greeting people at the door, recognizing them, and remembering their first names," Anna says.

"People want to see the owner, especially to be greeted by him. I find that very important," Morra adds. "And now we're getting the children of the original customers."

While upscale, the décor also manages to make you feel at home, with what Anna describes as "the garden look". That includes unique floral canopies on the ceiling, designed to muffle the noise for diners. The house seats 150, and patrons can choose between the formal dining room, the solarium, and the upstairs piano room (featuring live music).

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Michael Morra, owner of Clarkson's popular Michael's Back Door restaurant at 1715 Lakeshore Road W., is joined by Stephan Waespi, the talented head chef. The popular gathering spot celebrates its 20th anniversary this year.



Stephan Waespi, chef at Michael's Back Door, shows off one of his favorite recipes, Lumache Trifoliate.



## SECRETS OF THE CHEFS

# Celebrity chef now at Michael's

The chef at Michael's Back Door, Stephan Waespi, has rubbed shoulders with celebrities including Pierre Trudeau, Jane Seymour and Robert Mitchum, while preparing dishes for them.

Born and trained as a chef in Switzerland, Waespi once created a \$1,000-a-plate meal for Italian tenor Luciano Pavarotti at a Toronto restaurant.

And, although cooking for the stars was exciting, Waespi derives his greatest pleasure from creating and preparing dishes that please.

He began as an apprentice at the tender age of 15, at a well-known hotel in Zurich. In 1980 he came to Toronto on an 18-month contract with the Harbour Castle Hilton. Later, he worked at the Bristol Place Hotel.

Before coming on board at Michael's Back Door in 1985, Waespi worked as a restaurant consultant.

One of his favorite dishes is Lumache Trifoliate — Snails With Mushroom Garlic Herb Sauce. It's different from the traditional dish of snails in garlic butter, he said, and much better.

It is definitely a hit at the restaurant.

Michael's Back Door is located at 1715 Lakeshore Rd. W., in Clarkson. For information call 822-5751.

### LUMACHE TRIFOLATE (Snails With Mushroom Garlic Herb Sauce)

24 large snails, washed and drained

1 ounce butter, cut in small cubes

2 cloves of garlic, chopped fine

1 shallot, chopped fine

1 cup mushrooms, sliced

1 dash of white wine

2 dashes Worcestershire sauce

1 cup demi-glace gravy

Sauté snails in butter with garlic and shallots. Add mushrooms.

Deglaze with white wine and simmer for one minute. Add a cup of demi-glace and Worcestershire sauce and simmer for two minutes.

Add cubes of butter and bring to a smooth texture. Season to taste.

Sprinkle with chopped parsley and fresh chives.

Serve with plain or toasted garlic bread. Serves four people as an appetizer.

## Michael's Back Door in Clarkson Galleria

# New spot dishes up Italian fare

By JANICE BRADBEER

The phrase "keep it in the family" would seem to be appropriate for the Morras. Lorenzo Morra works in Lorne Park as a hairdresser, while at 1715 Lakeshore Rd. W., Michael started Michael's Hairstyling, now situated in the Clarkson Galleria. Michael shares an office upstairs in the Galleria with brother Tony, who moved from Toronto to Mississauga to practise law.

The Clarkson Galleria, which opened in May, 1979, was a winner in the first annual 1981 competition for the Mississauga Urban Design Award. The jury report called the Galleria's architecture "... whimsical, stopping short of post-modernist pretensions."

Michael Morra, a 20-year resident of Mississauga and owner of the Clarkson Galleria, describes it as having a contemporary historical motif, with an abundance of green, blue and gold colors.

The stores open sideways to create a mall with "a light and airy feeling" and sunshine streaming in "lots of windows to wash," jokes Morra.

Describing his reaction to the Urban Design Award, Morra says, "The award was quite a

surprise. I didn't even know we were entered."

His reaction to a new restaurant in the Clarkson Galleria, appears to be similar. "It's doing very well. I'm pleasantly surprised," says Morra.

### RESTAURANT

Michael's Backdoor dining room, named after its owner, Michael Pagliaro, opened on 15 December 1981. Pagliaro owned the Villa Rosa in Port Credit and before that he was maitre d' at the Latina at Queensway and Royal York Rd.

Michael's offers a wide sampling of Italian cuisine for both its luncheon and dinner menus. For dinner, you can choose from antipasto, soups, salads and desserts, as well as pasta, chicken, steaks and seafood.

The dinners are moderately priced, with pasta costing \$6 or \$6.50 and \$9 for veal. You can take your choice of such samplings as green linguini with clams, cannelloni con ricotta (cheese), veal scaloppine Marsala, chicken cacciatore or Alaska king crab. For dessert, try torta della casa, topped with espresso or cappuccino coffee.

No pizza is served. "Most good restaurants don't serve pizza. Pizza is like a fast food," explains Morra.

### VEAL AND CHICKEN

The food served at Michael's is similar to Italian cuisine, although "somewhat canadianized," says Morra. The luncheons as well are filling like those back in Italy.

"They make lunches like a supper in Italy. From 1 until 4 p.m., everyone goes home and eats. They work again from 4 until 8, then they have less supper," although Morra adds that the supper again consists of pasta and salad, although in fewer portions.

"The Italian food is mostly based on veal and chicken. Seafood is very much used in Italy," says Morra, citing the seafood dishes available on the menu.

The restaurant, with about a 75 seating capacity, is furnished in a clear pine finish, with brown and cream table cloths, beige walls and Tiffany lamps, which reflect the architecture of the rest of the Galleria.

### LOVER'S LANE

The dining area curves into nooks and crannies, particularly a small, private aisle that looks out the window into the Galleria. Providing seating for about 10 people, it has been aptly dubbed "lover's lane."

Offering an explana-



Michael Pagliaro (left) owns Michael's Backdoor Dining Room, located in the Clarkson Galleria, 1715 Lakeshore Rd. W., which in turn is owned by

Michael Morra (right). Michael's Backdoor features Italian cuisine, served in an atmosphere of finished pine and tiffany lamps.

(Staff photo by Rob Beintema)

tion for the success of Michael's Morra says, "This area has a good class of people who do eat out. I think that the number 1 factor is that Pagliaro has followers who used to go to the other restaurants.

"It is long waited for in this area, this type of restaurant," Morra continues. "Instead of travelling 10 miles away, people are now going

local. We have people coming from Oakville and by word of mouth," which, he adds, is the best way for a restaurant

to become popular.

The hours for Michael's Backdoor are Monday through Thursday, noon to 11 p.m.; Fri-

day, noon until midnight; Saturday, 5 p.m. to midnight and Sunday, 5 to 10 p.m. The number is 822-5751.

## Applewood variety show

Applewood Heights Secondary School will present Showcase '82, a variety show, April 29 and 30, starting at 7:30 p.m. Tickets for adults

are \$3 and students and senior citizens are \$2 by contacting the school, located at Tomken and Bloor, at 279-6090.

# Back Door still out front

By JIM ROBINSON  
Staff

One of the city's most popular restaurants for fine dining, Michael's Back Door, is marking its 20th anniversary this month.

Michael's Back Door opened when Michael Morra took what many at the time thought was a major gamble by turning several neighbouring buildings he owned along Lakeshore Rd. W. into the Clarkson Galleria.

Morra decided to include a restaurant. But, because the storefronts along Lakeshore Rd. were occupied, he built his restaurant in the back and hence the name, Michael's Back Door.

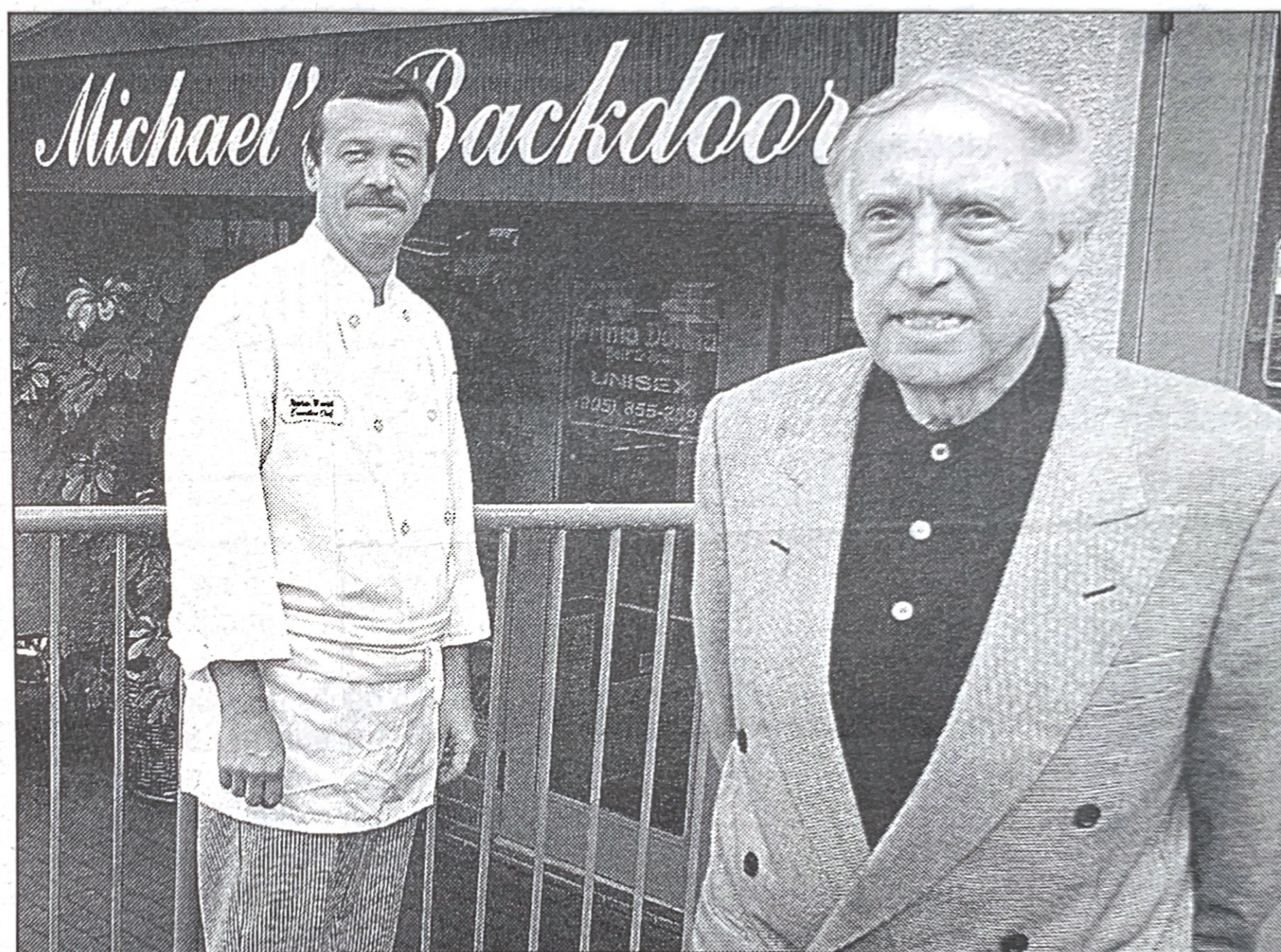
The restaurant emerged as one of the city's finest 16 years ago when Stephan Waespi, the former head chef at the Airport Hilton and a well-known restaurant consultant, came on board. He had heard Morra was looking to bring five-star cuisine to his new establishment.

"We met, we talked and we hit it off right away," said Waespi. "I guess the rest, as they say, is history. I've been here ever since."

The restaurant has remained at the top of Mississauga's list of finest dining spots ever since.

"Twenty years is a long time in this business, but we listen to our customers and we try to provide them with the kind of meal they expect," said Morra.

"We want to thank all those people who have supported us over the years, and we want to do something to celebrate."



Staff photo by Fred Loek

Michael's Back Door owner Michael Morra, right, along with chef Stephan Waespi, are pictured outside of the famed Clarkson eatery. The pair have worked together for 16 years and are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the restaurant.

Over the next two weeks, a number of new dishes and appetizers will be unveiled.

Waespi has just returned from an extended tour through Europe, where he picked up a number of new recipes he's anxious to try.

"We have some new things I think our customers will enjoy, but we will also be

offering the dishes that we are famous for, like our angel hair pasta and lobster," said Waespi.

Morra pointed out that "we have always adjusted with the times. We have lasted 20 years because we have added new twists to our traditional high quality and excellent service."

# Backdoor hideaway is front of the class 5

To Italians living in Clarkson Village, Michael's Back Door is home away from home. For the rest of us, it's one of Oakville/Mississauga's best kept secrets.

For over 17 years, Michael Morra and Chef Stephan Waespi have captured the hearts and appetites of discerning mediterranean food lovers from near and far. It's the kind of place that once discovered, causes you to hesitate in sharing with friends; it's that unique, that good.

Prior to becoming Michael's right hand man in 1984, Chef Waespi was cooking for the likes of Sophia Loren and Pierre



Sue Gogishvili (rear left), President of *menu* magazine, joins guests from Italy in the upper piano room. Undisturbed below, other guests enjoy the main solarium dining room with floor to ceiling windows

Trudeau at places like Bristol Place and Winston's. Now his delightful treats (such as a house specialty—*Capelli d'Angelo con Salsa di Aragosta*—lobster in cream tomato sauce, no less), are produced daily for such delicate palates as yours and mine.

The ambience of the two-tiered solarium dining room and romantic front room are ideally suited to such fare. And the 2nd floor "piano room" is available for small celebrations.

Although Michael's Back Door can seat around 100 or so, reservations for the solarium room are highly recommended. Now that *menu* has been there, it may not be a secret much longer.

**1715 Lakeshore Rd. W, Mississauga (Clarkson Galleria) Parking at rear – 822-5751**

## Antipasti

- Lumache all aBordolese*: Snails in a red wine garlic herb sauce ..... 5.95
- Cozze Marinara*: Mussels in garlic, white wine and tomatoes ..... 7.95
- Gamberi alla Ligure*: Shrimp in a lemon wine garlic sauce ..... 8.95

## Zuppa

- Crema di Patate e Aglio Fresco*: Cream of potato soup with fresh garlic ..... 3.95
- Minestrone*: Fresh vegetable soup ..... 3.95

## Vitello

- Piccata al Limone*: Veal in a delicate lemon sauce 13.95
- Scaloppini di Vitello con Asparagi*: Veal scaloppini in a cream and pernod sauce, topped with asparagus ..... 15.95

## Pollo, Manzo e Agnello

- Petto di Pollo al Limone e Timo*: Breast of chicken in a clear lemon thyme sauce ..... 13.95
- Bistecca con Salsa al Pepe Verde*: Sirloin steak with a green peppercorn sauce ..... 18.95

## Pesci

- Filetti di Tulapia alle Mandorle*: Filet of tulapia fish, pan fried in a roasted almond sauce ..... 14.95
- Gamberoni Marinati moda Estate*: Black tiger shrimp with roasted julienne of peppers and zucchini in a wine garlic herb sauce ..... 17.95
- Capesante al Pepe Verde di Madagascar*: Scallops in a cream madagascar peppercorn sauce served with angel hair pasta ..... 18.95
- Sogliola all Mungnala*: Dover sole in a light lemon butter sauce ..... 23.95

## Pasta

- Tortellini Quattro Formaggi con Pomodori Secchi*: Meat tortellini in a four cheese sauce with sundried tomatoes ..... 13.95
- Sombretti al Frutti di Mare alla Vodka*: Seafood ravioli in a vodka tomato cream sauce ..... 14.95
- Fettuccine Michael*: Fettuccine with shrimp, in a herb tomato sauce (house specialty) ..... 14.95
- Capelli d'Angelo con Salsa di Aragosta*: Angel hair pasta with lobster in a cream tomato sauce (house specialty) ..... 15.95