



# THE NEWS-DISPATCH



## Fine Living - Dining With The 'Elite'

*Chef's passion for food evident at successful local cafe*

**Deborah Sederberg**

The News-Dispatch

MICHIGAN CITY - Frazzled shoppers desiring even a brief respite from what can become the lunacy of the season can find it at Cafe Elite & Catering, 231 W. Seventh St.

Decorated in warm shades of dark orange and cream with toasty brown trim, the restaurant presents a fitting setting for tables set with glass-topped white tablecloths.

Dining is on two floors and, in summer, outside on the patio.

The focus at Cafe Elite is on the food, co-owners Mark Kolasa and Amanda Kosek say. Doing that helps them appreciate the joy of feeding customers.

Now a six-year veteran of the city, Cafe Elite serves lunch and dinner, with dishes ranging from light salads to complete dinners of steaks, chicken or seafood. Pasta is a favorite with diners as well, including the ravioli of the day and the roasted, hand-rolled garlic gnocchi.

A 1999 Michigan City High School graduate, Kolasa also is a graduate of the Cooking and Hospitality Institute in Chicago.

"I've always had a passion for food," Kolasa said. "Even when I was little, I used to play cooking show," just as some youngsters might play school or house.

Julia Child is iconic to Kolasa. Like the late TV cook, Kolasa has enormous respect for the French roots of modern western cooking.

He's paid his dues in various kitchens around town, Kolasa said. He worked with Conde Catering at Orak Shrine Temple, "and I helped to reopen the Duneland Beach Inn."

The catering end of Cafe Elite involves work at weddings, meetings and various parties, including lots of holiday parties.

On a recent afternoon, Ed Lysaught of accounting firm Lysaught Salmon was having lunch with colleague Debby Glueckert at Cafe Elite.

Lysaught is especially fond of the Horsey Melt sandwich, built of marinated slices of steak topped with sautéed onions, mozzarella cheese, tomato, lettuce and a light horseradish sauce served on black bean and cracked pepper



Cafe Elite & Catering, 231 W. Seventh St. Anthony Lambré/The News-Dispatch



Chef/co-owner Mark Kolasa prepares a dish. Anthony Lambré/The News-Dispatch

bread.

Lysaught, whose office is within walking distance of the restaurant, also is fond of the herb-encrusted whitefish. He dines at Cafe Elite at least once a week.

"They do a nice job here," Lysaught added. "This is a great place to bring people."

Ken and Sandra Fraley, Chesterton, were enjoying a lunch break before shopping. Ken is distantly related to Kolasa, but Sandra said, "We knew about his catering business, but didn't even know he had a restaurant," she said.

Ken was enjoying the fish and chips, while Sandra dined on a sandwich of peppered turkey, fresh mozzarella, field greens, tomato, alfalfa sprouts and a sun-dried tomato aoli sauce served on French bread. She pronounced the sandwich, known as the Classic French, "delicious."

"I had the stuffed portabella mushroom as an appetizer and really enjoyed it," she added. The mushroom is filled with crab stuffing.

Roni Bostian, a friendly server at Elite, is happy to answer questions about food or drink. She also works as a home health care nurse and loves her job at Elite, and the hours as well.

"I have two little boys, and I can work while they are in school," she said. Referring to her bosses, she added, "They're really nice people."

Kolasa got his first experience in cooking with his mother and his grandmother.

"I used to help them get ready for special family occasions," he said.

He believes customers think of Elite as a fine-dining experience.

The restaurant is licensed to serve beer and wine.

Kolasa and Kosek - partners in real life as well as in business - select wine for its quality and at a price local diners can afford.

"We go to tastings and to other events" to look for wine, he said.

The wines come from France, Italy, Australia, even Chile, as well as from California and Washington state.

The beauty of the restaurant business comes from "bringing people around the table and seeing their smiles and seeing how happy they are," Kolasa said. "That's rewarding."

Call Cafe Elite at 873-1788 for more information.

Contact Deborah Sederberg at [dsederberg@thenewsdispatch.com](mailto:dsederberg@thenewsdispatch.com).

### **Menu items at Cafe Elite & Catering**

- Stuffed Portabella, \$6.95.
- Baked Brie encased in light pastry paired with fresh fruits and toast points, \$6.25.
- Nested chicken favorite - a local favorite - nests lemon almond chicken salad atop a bed of shoestring potatoes, \$7.75. Garnished with an assortment of fresh fruits and sweet bread.
- Szechwan noodle salad, warm Asian noodles tossed with Oriental vegetables, Asian sauces and seasonings, \$6.95.
- The Blue Pear, mixed greens tossed with pear, red onion, blue cheese and dressed in hazelnut vinaigrette, \$4.75.
- Spinach salad with fresh strawberries, toasted almonds, red onion, light vinaigrette and topped with Parmesan, \$4.95.

Diners may choose to add a broiled chicken breast to their salads for \$1.75.

- Pretzel-encrusted chicken breast really does have a crust of pretzels, finished off with a Parmesan spinach cream sauce, \$10.95.
- Pan-roasted lamb medallions, sautéed in a special herb crust until medium rare, \$17.95.
- Chicken Pojarski, rustic-style hand-prepared chicken cutlets sautéed in butter and finished with a roasted red pepper cream sauce, \$12.95.
- Bruschetta chicken pasta, sautéed chicken breast prepared in a tomato and basil sauce served over penne pasta, \$12.95.
- Exotic mushroom tortalloni, large tortellini blanketed in a spinach and toasted almond gorgonzola cream, \$11.25.
- Steak Diane, pan sautéed filet medallions, finished with a classic mushroom and brandy sauce, \$16.95.
- Mahogany glazed filet mignon, eight ounce pan roasted filet glazed with a flavorful sweet reduction sauce, \$20.95.
- Pan sautéed lake perch, served with drawn butter, \$13.95.
- Scampi style prawns, traditionally prepared in a lemon garlic wine sauce, \$15.95.
- Roasted salmon, classically seared and served with a remoulade sauce, \$14.25.

Combinations include petite filet mignon and garlic shrimp (\$20.95) or grilled chicken breast (\$17.95), or grilled chicken breasts and fried shrimp, \$18.95

Homemade desserts are different every day.