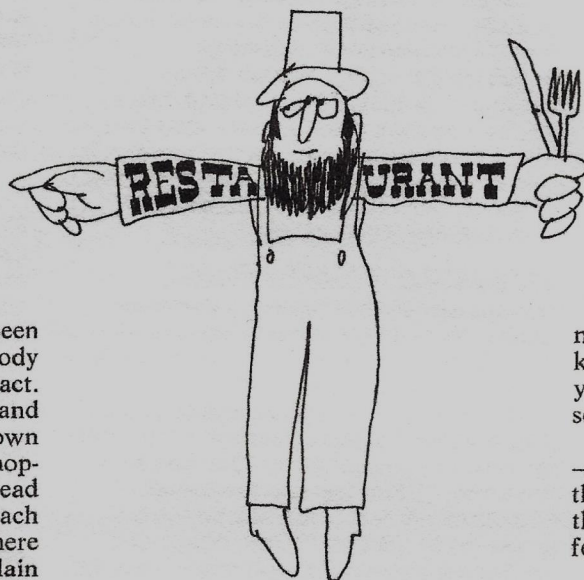


Plain 'n Unfancy

BY BARBARA ANN ROSENBERG



Trainer's in Quakertown has been around almost as long as anybody can remember—39 years to be exact. It started out as a truckers' stop—and over the years has just sort of grown like Topsy, until now it has a whopping seating capacity of 750 spread out over a number of rooms, each with a totally different atmosphere and price range. The food is plain but abundant. Quakertown is in the northwest corner of Bucks County—where the Dutch country begins.

All the food is Pennsylvania Dutch—more or less—and comes out of a single kitchen, but the variety and the tab depends on which of the rooms you choose to eat in. For instance, there's a coffee shop, counter and all, where they still serve what they nostalgically call a truckers' luncheon but carefully explain that it's the same thing other places dub a businessman's special. Then there's the Businessman's Lounge where the atmosphere and service are still pretty casual—place mats and hand-carried plates. You reach the pinnacle of Quakertown plush when you select the Don-Dor-Mar Room, newest of all, only 20 years old, and named for the son, daughter and mother of the owner.

The decor of the Don-Dor-Mar is furnished eclectically with upholstered banquettes and distelfinks vying for prominence. Nevertheless, it's pleasant, comes equipped with enzyme-white nappery and your food gets carried in on a tray—once you settle on a final choice. And that's difficult, because the menu reads like a telephone directory, with so many choices of appetizers, soups, salads, steaks, chops, seafood, poultry, vegetables and desserts that you'd better order an extra drink to tide you over the time it takes to peruse it all. Another drink isn't a bad idea any-

way, since you don't need to save alcoholic tolerance for the wine—the selection is limited and nothing to write home about.

The top of the menu proclaims Pennsylvania Dutch cooking—and so it is, with a difference. You're not limited to seven sweets and seven sours and dishes with unpronounceable names. But you'll have no doubt about the major culinary influence when you're finished your meal.

Trainer's serves platters (with meat or fish and a couple of vegetables) or complete dinners—so complete that when you're finished you're gasping for breath as you loosen your belt a couple of notches.

On regular dinners a sizeable scoop of chopped chicken livers (garnished with plenty of raw onions) is a wise starter choice—but if chicken livers don't turn you on, there's plenty else to choose from.

Next you're in for a soup course (these Pennsylvania Dutch have a horror of anyone being underfed) and you might want to settle on a thick lobster bisque (best diluted with a healthy dollop of sherry). Onion soup is another choice, but not an especially wise one. Or clam chowder, different from either Manhattan or New England, although a closer relative of the former.

Lovely little homemade frosted rolls accompany all of this, and if the combination seems a bit strange, just

nibble them between courses and keep in mind that no one promised you a continental oasis—just good solid Pennsylvania Dutch fare.

Salad fits in somewhere along here—and if you're a roquefort freak, this dressing, loaded with chunks of the real thing, is well worth the extra few cents it costs.

And on and on to sauerbraten, a bit on the sweet side, again testimony to its regional ancestry, chicken and dressing, or shad, or king crab or lamb chops or shrimp or roast beef—or whatever—they all appear, with minor variations on the menu of daily specials, all pretty well done in their own idiom—at unbeatable prices.

Save a corner for some mouth-watering desserts—strawberry pie, apricot crumb pie, lemon chiffon pie and more—all homemade and delectable.

Or ignore all these ordinary diners and settle on an à la carte he-man steak—\$10 for a whopping two-pound serving—or a three-pound lobster (\$14.25). A shore dinner consists of shrimp cocktail, soup, a one-pound lobster plus some fried goodies—a soft-shell crab, deviled crab patty, lobster tail, scallop, clams, haddock and oysters—and, hold your breath, in the event that you're still able to chew, they throw in a half chicken or piece of steak. Top that off with a couple of vegetables for \$12.25 and see if you can waddle out to your car. Or, better yet, maybe you ought to walk home.

Trainer's is located on Route 663, a short distance from the Quakertown Exit on the Northeast Extension of the Turnpike. Monday to Thursday and Sunday open 11 a.m. to 10 p.m., Friday and Saturday 11 a.m. to 12:30 a.m., serving straight through. Weekday luncheon specials