

KOI

Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel, 310 Fourth St., Niagara Falls, 877-873-6322. 6 7

Pan-Asian innovation meets timeless traditions. Hours: W-Su, 5-10:30pm, M-Tu, closed. \$\$\$

KUNI'S

226 Lexington Ave., Buffalo, 881-3800. 6 7

Buffalo sushi favorite. Hours: lunch: Tu-Fr, 11:30am-1:45pm; dinner: Tu-Sa, 5-9pm; Su-M, closed. \$

SAKE CAFE

8222 Transit Rd., Williamsville, 689-2888. 6 7 8

An Asian fusion restaurant featuring the best of Pacific Asian countries in a contemporary setting. Hours: M-Th, 11am-10pm; F-Sa, 11am-11pm; Su, noon-10pm. \$\$

SAKURA RESTAURANT

3719 Union Rd., Cheektowaga, 683-7310. 6 7

Specializes in sushi, and also features combination plates. Hours: M-Sa, 11am-10pm. \$\$

SEABAR

475 Ellicott, Buffalo, 332-2928; 5235 Main, Williamsville, 204-5283. 6 7 8

A creative vision by chef Mike Andrzejewski, Seabar rests between traditional sushi huts and a fine dining experience. \$\$

SHOGUN ICHI

7590 Transit Rd., Williamsville, 631-8899. 6 7 8

A tappan bar with excellent sushi. Daily steak and lobster special. Hours: M-Th, 4-9:30pm; F-Sa, 4-10:30pm; Su, 3-9:30pm. \$\$

TAKI

5500 Victoria Ave., Niagara Falls, Ontario, 905-357-7274. 6 7 8

An authentic Japanese restaurant near Casino Niagara in Ontario. Specialties: unadon (broiled eel and rice), kara age chicken, teriyaki dishes, and sushi. Hours: daily, 11:30am-9:30pm. \$\$ (CDN)

WASABI

100 Plaza Dr., Ste. C, Williamsville, 689-5888. 6 7 8

752 Elmwood Ave., Buffalo; 887-8388. 6 7 8
Owner and chef Tony Kang has made sushi for over twenty years. Hours: M-Th, 11am-10:30pm; F-Sa, 11am-11pm; Su, 12:30-10pm. \$\$

Mexican

AVA CADO'S

3500 Main St., Amherst, 446-5080. 6 7 8

Mexican food made fresh. \$\$

COYOTE CAFE

36 Main St., Hamburg, 649-1837. 6 7 8

Big portions of both Mexican standards and a few culture-blending curiosities. Notables include tequila lime shrimp and chicken espinacas burrito. Hours: M, take-out orders noon-9pm; Tu-Th, noon-9pm; F-Sa, noon-10pm. \$

EDRITOS

1633 Hertel Ave., Buffalo, 836-6106. 6 7 8

Food prepared daily from scratch, starting with salsas that are made with top-quality produce and other fine ingredients, to grilled meats that are USDA choice including boneless, skinless chicken. Hours: M-Th, 11am-7pm; F-Sa, 11am-7pm; Su, closed. \$\$

GRAMMA MORA'S MEXICAN RESTAURANT

1465 Hertel Ave., Buffalo, 837-6703. 6 7 8

The Hertel Ave. institution serves up green chili, Mexican staples, sopa de fideo, and a variety of margaritas. Hours: Tu-Th, 11am-10pm; F, 11am-11pm; Sa, noon-11pm, Su, 1-9pm. \$\$

LA TOLTECA

7530 Transit Rd., Williamsville, 565-0105. 6 7 8

More than seventy-five dinners of Mexican classics, from burritos to fajitas to pork rib. Live mariachi music and drink specials every other Monday. Hours: M-Sa, 11am-10pm; Su, noon-8pm. \$\$

LONE STAR FAJITA GRILL

1855 Hertel Ave., Buffalo, 833-7756. 6 7 8

Chicken and steak fajitas cooked to order, fresh salsa and guacamole, and other Tex/Mex traditionals. Hours: M-Sa, 11am-10pm; Su, noon-9pm. \$\$

MARGARITA'S

13-15 Jackson St., Batavia, 585-345-1407. 6 7 8

Authentic Mexican fare, with a casual atmosphere and lots of taco/burrito options. Hours: M-F, 11am-10pm; Sa, 11am-10:30pm; Su, noon-9pm. \$\$

SALSARITA'S FRESH CANTINA

The Foodies

The meat market is alive and well in WNY

by Vicki G. Marshall and Margaret M. Toohey; photos by kc kratt

For many Americans, the village butcher is a relic of the past. In a country of fast food, online shopping, giant chain supermarkets and mega-department/food stores, few are willing to be inconvenienced by making a separate trip just to buy meat. Foodie Vicki is sadly a perfect example of this kind of thinking. There is a lovely butcher shop right in the heart of Lewiston—the Natural Link; Margy goes there all the time. For Vicki it's just another stop. Too bad for her; she's missing a rare experience, as the number of butcher shops in America near extinction levels.

Does it really take too much time to make this separate trip? Are we afraid of the personal contact that comes from talking with the butcher? Are we ignorant of what good meat really is? Or is it that we think a meat market is more expensive than a supermarket? The answer is elusive and probably a combination of these factors. However, we can happily report that several friendly neighborhood butcher shops and meat markets are doing just fine in Western New York. One of them is **Johnny's Meat Market, at 1191 Hertel Avenue**. Established in 1945 and at its present location since 1960, it appears that not much has changed ambiance-wise since Mike Aloisio's father opened on Hertel forty-nine years ago.

According to Mike, his father got the recipe for his Italian sausage from an uncle who was the very first person to pack cheese and parsley inside the meat. This apparently resulted from the presence of a rather large wheel of cheese that the uncle had to do something with. Regardless of whose idea it was, the Italian sausage at Johnny's is their best seller, followed closely by their chicken sausage filled with spinach and feta cheese. The Foodies sampled both and can report the reputation of both varieties is well deserved. Mike even provided his recipe as a bonus: No elaborate procedure, just place the sausage in a pan and bake in a pre-heated 350-degree oven for thirty-five minutes. Even sausage aficionados (our area is known to have more than a few) will be surprised by the outcome of this easy technique.

Johnny's is also well known for prepared dishes. Wednesday is pasta day; the lasagna made with fresh "made-that-day" noodles sells out every week. Mike's mother does all the cooking and she was very proud to tell us about her popular brasiole, meatballs, meat loaf, and chicken cutlets (on Thursdays), tripe, stuffed mushrooms, and stuffed hot peppers. On the Saturday of our visit a special order of four twice-baked potatoes looked absolutely divine as they were carried out by a happy customer.

In addition to the prepared main dishes, Johnny's offers homemade salads such as chicken, olive, shrimp, ham, and macaroni. The cold cuts are top of the line, never presliced. The sample that we tried, dry-cured ham, was superb. The market also stocks a large selection of frozen entrees and maintains a small stand for sweets stocked by a woman who brings in her own home-baked cookies and other goodies.

And now for the meat. Johnny's offers a full range: chicken, pork, and beef of all cuts and types. Strip steaks were available for \$8.99 a pound and center cut pork chops for \$2.89 a pound. They also make their own peameal bacon. We asked Mike how the business was doing in these uncertain economic times. His answer? "We always do well and our business never changes; we just keep doing what we've always done." After our visit there it's easy to see the reasons for their success: fresh meats and salads; great deli items; wonderful take-home meals, and warm, friendly, knowledgeable people to take care of the customers. It's also easy to see why the readers of this magazine have voted Johnny's the Best Meat Market of WNY.

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