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Delicious defrost

Chili and stew warm from the inside out

By Sheila Nero

In the middle of winter, we can all use a delicious defrost. So what kind of restaurant food is a winter warmer-upper, yet lighter post-holiday for both the pocketbook and waistline? Chili and stew, always hot, are never boring in the hands of the right chef. Lake Country diners have plenty of choices:

WARD'S HOUSE OF PRIME

Prime Rib Chili: Chef Matt Thompson says, "What separates us is that our chili is made from prime rib that's slowly cooked, so it's tender."

Main ingredients: Kidney beans, celery, onions, tomatoes, green peppers and just a touch of jalapeno, for smokiness.

Toppings: Oyster crackers and shredded white cheddar cheese are served; sour cream and scallions are available upon request.

Where: 515 Wells St., Delafield.

CORNERSTONE RESTAURANT

Vegetarian Chili: "While the majority of our dining guests are meat-eaters, we also have a large base of customers who are vegetarian, vegan, gluten-free or simply health-conscious. This vegetarian chili is vegan and gluten-free, but even more importantly is full of flavor and warmth," says owner Judy Knoernschild.

Main ingredients: Pinto, black and kidney beans, plus garbanzo beans on occasion, tomatoes, onions, bell pepper and garlic, with zucchini and/or butternut squash.

Toppings: Chopped fresh onion, red pepper and tomatoes.

Where: S43 W31343 State Highway 83, Genesee Depot.

LOUISE'S

Cioppino: Marketing Director Tina Lawler points out that Italian fish stew (pronounced chuh-PEEN-oh) is a healthy option after the heavier meals of the holiday season.

Main ingredients: Fresh fish, calamari, mussels, clams and shrimp in a seasoned broth with tomatoes, Chardonnay and red chili peppers.

Topping: A dusting of parmesan is popular.

Where: 275 Regency Court, Brookfield.

THE CLARKE HOTEL

Irish Stew: Chef Troy Mueller says, "We like to keep things simple. This stew is a 'stick to your bones, make you feel good' kind of food."

Main ingredients: Fresh lean lamb from a local supplier, carrots, onions, celery and beef stock.

Topping: Shoestring sweet potato fries.

Where: 314 W. Main St., Waukesha.