

Community Life: Food



STAFF PHOTO: KATHY JOHNSON

The New York, New York triple decker (\$7.95) is hot corned beef and pastrami with Swiss cheese, cole slaw and brown mustard on seeded rye bread. You can try one at Catered Affair in Hillsborough.

A day for pastrami, Swiss

Common ingredients, but very different sandwiches



In our last episode, I talked about how the sandwiches in the traditional Home News Tribune coverage area have, for the most part, been beating to a pulp the sandwiches in the traditional Courier News area.

So, just as I was darned near ready to give up on Somerset County sandwiches, I took the advice of more than a dozen e-mailers and happened into (with the BIG BOSS, President and Publisher William "Skip" Hidlay, in tow) Catered Affair in Hillsborough.

Somerset County folks should be especially glad that I did — because there's a new front-runner, fellow chewers.

Let me start by saying that there are delis everywhere (except for in JABLIPP, where there are mostly are Godawful joints like Subway — yuck), and many people say the deli they go to is special. Well, most aren't.

A distinctive deli has to have certain traits: superior cold cuts (fresh), superior bread and rolls (fresh, fresh) and according to my dear, dear friend Caryn, outstanding pickles (fresh, fresh, fresh).

Other things also help: the people preparing your food should be wearing gloves, the people preparing your food should be washing their tools after every single use — there is nothing worse than getting a sandwich that contains the remnant contents and



STAFF PHOTO: AUGUSTO F. MENEZES

The City Grill at Colonial Diner is pastrami, Swiss cheese, tomato, Russian dressing, bacon and cole slaw on grilled rye. At \$9.98, it is too pricey for the portion, our columnist says.

CATERED AFFAIR

SANDWICH: New York, New York (triple decker)

COST: \$7.95

ADDRESS: Boro Center, 424 Route 206 South, Hillsborough

PHONE: 908-874-7790

RATING:



condiments of the sandwich prepared before yours.

Let me tell you that I once caught a person wiping her knife from the last sandwich on the bread of the sandwich she was making for me. After I asked her what planet she was from, I walked out.

Dear darlings, Catered Affair is a clean, bright, lovely place with friendly people on staff. You know, a smile goes a long way. (Which probably is why I haven't gotten very far — check out my mug on the Color In Black & White column on Tuesdays and Saturdays).

Anyway, Larry J., Marge P., Scott R., Barbara S. and

many others each suggested a different Catered Affair sandwich that is their favorite. Since there were so many suggestions, I picked a sandwich by the roll of the dice — Yo-leven, baby!

I chose the New York, New York triple decker (\$7.95), which is hot corned beef and pastrami with Swiss cheese, cole slaw and brown mustard on seeded rye bread. As we say in Philly: KUZZ, that jaun is a menace to society!

The bread was perfect, the pastrami and corned beef were VERY fresh and the portions generous — some of these places around here charge large sums of money, and when you see the offering, you immediately are reminded

of Clara Peller (star of the 1984 "Where's the beef?" ad campaign for Wendy's). In other words, they act like they can't even spare you any meat.

Fellow chewers, this one's a real winner, so I have no choice — four Liberty Bells. And you know what? This is the very first sandwich (including those in The Great Cheesesteak Hunt of 2002) that has received the maximum four Liberty Bell rating from yours truly.

But the truth is, this sandwich is significantly better than the 3 1/2 Liberty Bell sandwiches I have eaten, so fair is fair.

The BIG BOSS Skip and my mystery taster each had the New Orleans smothered sandwich (\$5.95), which is roast beef with melted jalapeno cheese on a Kaiser roll with mayo (I would use horseradish), lettuce and Louisiana hot sauce.

Skip says it is the best sandwich he has eaten in New Jersey. "The roast beef was very fresh and I love the drizzle of hot sauce," he said.

Skip says his sandwich is 3 1/2 Liberty Bells. I think the New Orleans is quite a bargain as well at only \$5.95. Skip and I each had one of the luscious pickles that Catered Affair has in a jar on the counter. Caryn would love them. I guess there's nothing left to say — except maybe: yummmmmmmmmmm (11 m's for the Yo-leven).

My trek into Home News Tribune territory this week took me to the Colonial Diner in East Brunswick. This was very convenient for me because I had to be at our East Brunswick office for an appointment.

While at the HNT, I met for the first time one of our new account executives, Stephanie Argenziano.