

FOOD FINDS

Eating at Asmara is like taking a trip to East Africa

By Al Stankus

IN MOST of the world, the adventure, intrigue and learning experience that comes from eating foreign foods is foreign to most people. No such problem in our town, as food-crazed Boston has given another ethnic group a chance to strut its culinary stuff with the opening of Asmara, a restaurant featuring the cuisine of East Africa.

Asmara Restaurant
714 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge
864-7447

Occupying the former space of a health food store in the multi-ethnic dining capital of Central Square, Asmara gives the city its first serious Ethiopian restaurant.

The menu is almost evenly divided into chicken, lamb, beef, vegetarian and "house specialties." No real surprise here. But when the tasty food arrives, the friendly waitresses are quick to add the uninitiated in the proper way to eat Ethiopian food.

Only napkins and glasses cover the tablecloth. On this "silverless" table a very large, pastel platter is placed. Filling the

platter are giant slabs of the "Ethiopian edible silverware," called injera. Made from a fermented millet flour batter, injera is fried on only one side. In frying, gas bubbles escape through the surface, giving injera a naturally sour taste and a surface loaded with pits and potmarks. One quick lesson in how to eat with injera and you're on your own.

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Roll up spicy pieces of lamb (tsobhl beghlo-yobog watt, \$5.90), raw slices of thinly cut tenderloin (gored, \$7), mild vegetarian creations (\$4.75), chicken stews served with a hard-boiled egg (\$5.75) and an amazing potato salad dressed with a green chili dressing (\$2).

Each entree is served individually, making Asmara an ideal setting for a large group to eat banquet style.

While the sauces are thick and quite tasty, they are not plentiful. The main course is just covered meaning that if you surround your meat or vegetable with a large piece of injera, the entree may be overwhelmed by the bread's unique taste.

For injera lovers, this isn't a problem, but for those who shy away from the sour be advised that injera can be ordered presoaked in either a mild, thick sauce or a spicy pepper sauce. Both sauces permeate the nooks and crannies of the bread and the thick pepper sauce has a nice bite without destroying the senses.

Here's an opportunity to eat with your fingers and hands, and not suffer the wrath of some unforgiving superior. It doesn't take long to become adept at this new way of eating.

The restaurant has become a gathering point for the area's rapidly growing East African population. Combine this with the good food served in a pleasant surrounding, and Bostonians have yet another restaurant that allows them to savor and experience another part of the melting pot.

WEEKEND WINNERS

TOM Stoppard's play "The Real Thing" will be performed by Providence's Trinity Repertory Company. British playwright Stoppard's romantic comedy of a writer searching for love will be performed tonight through Nov. 23 at the Trinity Theater, 201 Washington St., Providence. Tickets for the performances range from \$16-\$23. For more information call (401) 351-4242.

THE Dinosaur Dance Company premieres three new works tonight and tomorrow at the Loeb Drama Center. The highlight of the program is "Liquid Days, Liquid Nights," set to the music of Phillip Glass, David Byrne, Paul Simon and Laurie Anderson. Also included in the program are "Seven Studies," set to the music of Boston composer Gunther Schuller, and "Im Sommerwind," set to Anton Webern's tone poem. For ticket information for the 8 p.m. shows call 647-8300.

NEW YORK City's Ballad Theater Company will present "In the Tangle of a Targeted City," at TheaterWorks tonight and tomorrow. The play, the tale of Hiroshima in 1945 and New York today, will be performed for the benefit of the Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility. For ticket information call 720-1988.

THE Boston Concert Opera opens its 11th season with a performance of Massenet's "Manon" at Symphony Hall tonight at 8. This romantic tale of ill-fated lovers will star Neil Shiooff as Des Grieux and Patricia Schuman as the flirtatious Manon Lescaut. For ticket information 636-1166.

COUNTRY/ROCK/BLUES guitarist J.J. Cale has seen his songs covered by artists like Eric Clapton, Waylon Jennings and Mark Knopfler. Cale, who wrote songs like "After Midnight," "Cocaine" and "Call Me the Breeze," plays two rare shows tonight at the Nightstage, Cambridge. Tickets for the 9:30 p.m. and midnight shows are \$9.50 in advance, \$10.50 at the door. For more information call 497-1118.



TWIST AND SHOUT: Beatle fans, take note. The Hyatt Regency, Cambridge, hosts Beatlemagic '86 this weekend.



SOLO SUCCESS: Jeffrey Osborne appears at Symphony Hall Sunday. Gwen Guthrie is the opening act.

THE Somerville Theater hosts a performance by three "American Troubadors" folk artists tomorrow. Dylan traditionalist Eric Andersen, Texas-native Townes Van Zandt and Boston's Cormac

McCarthy, each respected singer/songwriters, will perform on the triple bill. Tickets for the 8 p.m. concert are \$11.50 in advance, \$13 at the door. For more information call 497-1118.

THE New England Life Hall hosts a performance by the Longwood Symphony Orchestra tomorrow. The medical-area symphony will perform a program of the works of Bach, Beethoven and Brahms. For ticket information for the 8 p.m. concert call 732-8149.

"RHINESTONE Cowboy" Glen Campbell lends his voice for the benefit of the Charles River Association of Retarded Citizens when he plays at the Wang Center tomorrow. Campbell, a long-time country veteran, has found wide acclaim with songs like "Linceman for the County" and "By the Time I Get to Phoenix." Tickets for the event are \$15.50-\$50. For more information call 444-4347.

YEAH, yeah, yeah. Beatle fans take the long and winding road to the Hyatt Regency, Cambridge, for Beatlemagic '86, a four-day Columbus Day weekend Beatlefest. Beatle movies,

promos, videos, records, "Beatlemania" performances, posters and a special guest appearance by original Beatle drummer Pete Best are the highlights for the weekend. Tickets for the shows are \$12 in advance, \$15 at the door. For more information call 720-3434.

EMERSON College presents Marsha Norman's "Getting Out," at the Main Stage Theater through Sunday. The drama, written by "night, Mother" playwright Norman, is the story of a woman parolee's struggle to overcome the darker side of her personality. Tickets for the four performances are \$4 for the general public, \$2 for students. The Main Stage is located at 69 Brimmer St. For more information call 578-8785.

FORMER drummer Jeffrey Osborne found fame and success when he moved out from behind his kit and embarked on a solo singing career. The former LTD member and Smokey Robinson session man appears at Symphony Hall Sunday with special guest Gwen Guthrie. Tickets for the 7 p.m. concert are \$18.50. For more information call 720-3434.

— Julie Romandetta