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Chophouse turns 10, but the food remains timeless

By CHERYL WOODARDSNICHOLLS Special to The Oakland Press

Your wedding anniversary is approaching and you want take your spouse to a really nice restaurant but you're unsure of where to go? You want to go somewhere that offers an eclectic menu with a chic atmosphere?

The Big Rock Chophouse in Birmingham fits the bill.

The Big Rock Chophouse, in the historic Birmingham train station, opened its doors for business 10 years ago last month. The occasion was marked by a weeklong celebration of festivities ranging from wine tasting to a beer fest to a special Happy Hour that included a 10-Karat Rocktini birthday cake.

Chophouse General Manager Vera Day Rizer says the restaurant has spent all year planning the event and it was a tremendous success.

The restaurant is exquisitely decorated in a Southwest Montana hunting lodge theme. The menu boasts such items as steak, buffalo, ostrich, veal, lamb, lobster, tuna, salmon and a host of other delights.

"All of our foods are made from scratch," Rizer says. "We even offer a wonderful variety of pastries from which to choose. Our pastry chef Tonya Fallon continues to amaze our guests." The upscale eatery, at 245 S. Eton Street, offers seating for as many as 350 people and Rizer says favorite entrée selections include Dover sole, filet mignon, salmon and their bone-in filet. In order to encourage frequent dining, Rizer says they developed the Rock Rewards Dining Club program. "People get an electronic card that gets scanned after each visit," Rizer says. "For every dollar spent, you get a point. For every 1,500 points earned you get a dining certificate valued at \$50." For Rock Rewards members with a sweet tooth, a complimentary dessert is awarded each month.

Grilled Ostrich Filet

with Moroccan BBQ

Combine the following ingredients and simmer about 1/2 hour:

2 cups honey 1 cup rice wine vinegar 1 cup ketchup 1/2 cup lemon juice 2 cinnamon sticks 5 pieces star anise 3 cloves of garlic 1 tablespoon coriander seed 1 teaspoon red pepper flakes 1 teaspoon cardamom 1 tablespoon green peppercorns 1 tablespoon chopped ginger 1 teaspoon whole clove 1 teaspoon mace 1/2 cup chopped fresh cilantro 1 teaspoon salt

For the Grill

7-ounce ostrich filets (4), which you can find at specialty markets such as Holiday Market. Grill ostrich filets. Continuously brush with sauce while cooking. Do not cook over medium. Ostrich is very lean and will get dry and tough. The recommended safe cooking temperature is 160 F.