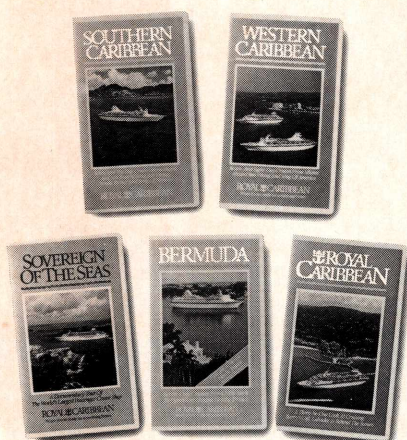


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DINING OUT

Restaurant Tour

Feast on chicken at Indiana's Kopper Kettle or board Wisconsin's Silver Coach for railroad cuisine.

KOPPER KETTLE INN

Morristown, Indiana

At this 150-year-old inn, the dining tradition began with fried chicken.

They don't sizzle chicken in vats of oil at the Kopper Kettle. They don't shake and bake it, and they surely don't zap it in a microwave. "We fry it in big cast-iron skillets like Hoosier farm women used to," boasts owner Mildred Taylor, whose mother panfried the Kopper Kettle's first chicken in 1927.

Mildred's customers feel right at home with her mother's old-fashioned ways. They devour more than 250 family-style chicken dinners on a typical Saturday night and break records on Mother's Day, when chicken-dinner orders top 800. "Four people do nothing except turn chicken," Mildred says.

With the golden fried chicken (\$10.95) come potatoes and gravy, green beans, corn, salad, yeast and cinnamon yeast bread, and ice cream desserts.

"We don't do anything fancy, foreign, or gourmet—just down-home, farm-style cooking," Mildred explains.

A stone walkway leads guests past the front porch of the 150-year-old, red-tile-roofed inn to the restful flower garden beyond. A grandfather clock and other antiques decorate the dining area. Many of the furnishings date back to 1861, when Mildred's great-grandfather bought the restaurant (then a roadside tavern).

Much has changed since then. But Lisa Mast, Mildred's daughter and the restaurant manager, plans to continue the family tradition of serving hearty, home-cooked meals to hungry guests.

Kopper Kettle Inn, 135 W. Main St., Morristown, Ind. (317/763-6767). 17 miles southeast of Indianapolis. Dinner Tuesdays-Sundays, \$8.95 and up. Lunch Tuesdays-Saturdays, \$5.35 and up. Reservations recommended.

—Suggested by Jerry and Melberne Mansfield, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

THE SILVER COACH

Stevens Point, Wisconsin

First-class dining in the elegance of a restored Soo Line passenger car.

Fifty years ago, railroad dining cars served the country's most distinguished cuisine. The Union Pacific, Burlington, and other rail lines vied for talented chefs and the latest culinary creations to grace their linen-draped tables, gleaming with polished silver.

Today, that stylish dining is back—aboard a 1905 Soo Line passenger car in Park Ridge, just outside Stevens Point in central Wisconsin. Restored to its original splendor, the dining car boasts a stained-glass dome at one end and a private stateroom (dining for two) at the other. In between, attentive waiters fuss over their guests.

Head chef James Gitter opened the restaurant in June, 1987. Everything here is made from scratch: homemade breads, noodles, and soups (flavored with garden-fresh vegetables and herbs), and cheesecakes, sour cream apple pie, and strudels for dessert.

Always experimenting—and with delicious results—James constantly changes his creative specials. Entrées that warrant repeat menu appearances include panfried veal topped with mozzarella, chicken à la James (breasts stuffed with broccoli and shrimp), char-broiled pizza with fresh vegetables and mozzarella, Cajun pan-blackened New York strip steak, and Mediterranean stir fry (shrimp and scallops with onion, broccoli, garlic, red pepper, white wine, and pine nuts).

Don't leave without sampling the pork ribs, smoked on the premises and served with spicy sauce.

The Silver Coach, 38 Park Ridge Dr., Stevens Point, Wisc. (715/341-6588). Open for dinner (from \$7.95) Mondays-Saturdays. Reservations recommended.

—Suggested by Joann Van Grinsven, Appleton, Wisconsin