

Not your typical church dinner: Hagerstown parish Valentine's meal offers taste buds a twist

By Karen Osborne

kosborne@CatholicReview.org

HAGERSTOWN – Ever wonder what a mealworm tastes like? Ask Marjorie Kellman. “They’re very tasty, very spicy,” Kellman said, as she went back for a second sample cup of the spicy larval delicacies at St. Joseph’s “You Want Me To Eat What? Again?” parish dinner Feb. 14. “They’re actually good!”

Mealworms – and other “exotic tastings” – were on the menu at the second annual Hagerstown event. Designed to build community and be a “twist” on the concept of a traditional parish dinner, the meal attracted a standing-room-only crowd of over 170, according to parish manager Angie Viar.

“These are foods people may not otherwise have the opportunity to try,” she said. Some parishioners came in couples, angling for a romantic Valentine’s outing, while others brought groups of family and friends from other area churches.

To view a slideshow from the event, navigate the arrows below.

More adventurous attendees loaded their plates with spicy mealworms, octopus, cactus, kelp chips, elk, venison, moose soup, calamari and chocolate-covered ants, all prepared and donated by St. Joseph parishioners. St. Joseph pastor Father John Jicha contributed by cooking up a pot of alligator chili.

For dessert, there were traditional blueberry muffins and chocolate-chip cookies, as well as new tastes such as Nigerian-style pastries, avocado ice cream, dragon fruit and protein bars made out of cricket flour.

Other parishioners prepared world ethnic dishes from India, Kenya, Japan and the Philippines, and for those who wanted something a little more close to home, St. Joseph’s volunteers served turkey, salad and mashed potatoes.

“I definitely went off my sprout salad diet to be here today,” joked parishioner Mary Ellen Robinson, who attended the event with her grandsons Charlie, 11 and Jake, 14. “We did this last year – we loved running around tasting everything, and couldn’t wait for this year.”

“I thought I was pretty daring, but after seeing that, I’m not sure,” said Monte Hilmo, lingering over an earthenware bowl filled with mealworms and its neighbor, a bowl of baby octopus prepared in an Asian fashion.

After dinner, parishioners perused a silent auction, whose prizes included Orioles tickets, gift certificates to local restaurants, and reserved parking for Easter Mass.

Also see:

John Carroll senior, Mount Carmel basketball coach earn top honors

Catholic Review announces engagement contest winners