

Drive Test questions remain unanswered

Our son is finally back behind the wheel, able to drive to work and see friends, but no thanks to the Aurora Drive Test facility. Regular readers will recall my column of a few months ago complaining about the DriveTest website and some of the challenges of booking a driver examination test online.

My complaints, at first, centred on technical aspects, mainly. But as my son suffered several G test challenges this summer and the humiliation of having his driving privileges taken away, it became a bigger issue for our whole family. Frankly, the Aurora testing facility — and its staff — have not impressed us.

Our son finally resorted to re-taking his G2 in Barrie where he attended college and passed there last week with no trouble. He and my husband said the difference between Barrie and Aurora was like night and day. Where Aurora is dingy, uninviting and confusing with few signs or help for customers to navigate, Barrie is open, inviting, with lots of signage for newcomers.

Rest of all, the examiner who tested my son was friendly, set him at ease by chatting a little during the test, and while not giving him a perfect score, felt he was safe and skillful enough to be on our roads.

This in stark comparison to one Aurora examiner who first failed our son attempting his G for not going fast enough on Hwy. 404 (as a law-abiding driver, he didn't want to exceed the speed limit). Then when she saw him for his repeat attempt, failed him again when a cyclist attempted to cross an intersection against the light.

Apparently she said both the driver and cyclist were in the wrong, but the entire second test lasted all of five minutes, hardly a fair check of his driving skills.

After the five-minute test fiasco, I tried calling directly to the Aurora location to speak to a supervisor. "This mailbox is full" is all I got after repeated attempts.

So I resorted to e-mailing customer complaints at the DriveTest website. I quoted the woman's employee number and first name, outlined my concerns and inquired if other complaints had been registered about her.

I received an automatic e-mail generated response the same day, however, five weeks later, I am still waiting for any answers to my questions.

But as an upset parent — and Ontario taxpayer — I did learn some interesting facts in subsequent research.

Did you know that the failure rate for a G2 licence at the Aurora driving centre is about 40 per cent? Or at least it was in November of 2010, when The Toronto Star did an investigative story on the wildly divergent failure rates across Ontario. Apparently Brampton and Downsview have even higher failure rates of 53 and 52 per cent respectively, while in less urban communities such as Orillia and Barrie, the rate is 26 and 22 per cent.

I gather most parents are aware of the vast differences. My own brother, who lives in a large urban community in Durham Region, told me all three of the young drivers in his family went to Peterborough for their driving tests.

But should we accept this geographic unfairness? Should York Region drivers be forced away from their closest government office administering driving tests because more of the examiners working there fail more of the drivers than examiners at other locations?

As a journalist, I have no proof the Aurora office and staff are substandard or that there's anything amiss with their driver tests. But as a taxpayer, our family's experience sure leaves me with many unanswered questions.



Marney Beck

FLOURLESS WEEK

This week we are cooking for those who need to eat 'Gluten Free', and we're featuring new dishes that are flourless, plus we have modified some of our recipes to comply. In a technical sense, 'gluten free' requires that products are made in a flourless facility, and that is not the case with us. We are careful in the preparation of these products out of respect for the need to be compliant, and truthfully we have a couple of "canaries in the mine", whom our dishes have worked well for. We'll use the term 'flourless', but it is all intended for a 'gluten free' diet. Here goes...

WHAT'S COOKING — AT THE — DELI

We'll start with soup, in this case Chicken, Vegetable and Rice. We use lots of our chicken breast, house-made stock, sweet onions, carrots, and celery. Featured at \$5.95/per container.

Next, we'll be making a Niçoise Quinoa Salad, using that fabul grain, diced sweet onions, sweet peppers in assorted colours, sliced black olives and snipped French beans, all dressed up in a fresh lemon vinaigrette. Featured at \$1.49/100g.

We'll be making copious amounts of our nitrate-free Turkey Breast, either with herbs or farmhouse style with just salt and pepper! This is available sliced at the deli. Reg. \$3.29/100g. Featured this week at 1/3 off.

Further, we'll be making a Pasta Dinner in our 4x5 folk. In this case Penne (made with rice flour) with our chicken, tomatoes, sweet onions, and parmesan. Featured this week at \$7.95.

And lastly, from our frozen section, we'll be making our Carrot, Ginger and Orange Soup. Always a hit, this usually serves four. Reg. \$7.95. This week 25% off.

P.S. We've made Flourless Shepherd's Pie. These are the 8x5 size, and they'll be featured at \$9.70 each.

RED OR GREEN GRAPES

These have been fabulous of late, and this is one item that I enjoy cold, right out of the fridge. Little nuggets of sweet refreshment! These come from California and to me they are the best of the season. Reg. \$2.99/lb.

\$1.99
PER LB.
THIS WEEK

BAR-BE-QUED CHICKENS

I'm thinking that the term is a bit of a misnomer, as they are actually spit-roasted, which bastes the chickens as they are cooking. What makes these so good is that we use larger, air-chilled chickens, which we pay more for, but we feel the reward is in the flavour, and the number of servings that you get from one of our chickens. In order to use these chickens on our big rotisserie, we had to do some engineering, as few machines are set up to do the larger size. We think that we've got it right now. The seasoning that we use is flourless and MSG free — both good things. If you are feeling a bit peckish (pardon the pun) we sell 1/2 birds as well.

Reg. \$12.95

1/3 OFF
THIS WEEK

—WHAT'S FOR— LUNCH?

We will be making two types of gluten free sandwiches this week; the first is with our Black Forest Ham and Swiss, along with Grethe's mixed greens, tomato and honey-lime mayo, and the second is our Oven-Roasted Turkey, avocado, tomato, Grethe's greens and a chipotle mayo, both on gluten free buns.

Also, we have a selection of bread, bagels, wraps, pizza crusts and even waffles — coming this Thursday (today).

Our Sunday Brunch will be our Tomato Basil Soup, using all the local stuff, followed by either Gluten Free Pasta with Chicken, our Flourless Beef Bourguignonne, or our Oven Roasted Turkey Breast with either rice or mashed potatoes and a mini dessert, tea or coffee. The best deal in town! Served from 11am til 2pm.

All For
\$10.95
Per Person

OUR CUT SQUASH AND TURNIPS ARE NOW READY!

ITALIAN SAUSAGES —HOT AND SWEET—

We'll be featuring our Italian Sausages this week because they are flourless, unlike most others that we make. Buns for these might be hard to come by, so it's probably best that you consider them a 'dinner sausage'. Either way, they are full of flavour, and heat if you opt for the hot version. Reg. \$4.99/lb.

25% OFF
THIS WEEK

—WHAT'S HAPPENIN'— OUTSIDE

We've got what you need to change the season of your front-step planter, as well as some gourds, mini pumpkins and soon-to-arrive some big ones, as well. Table-centres abound inside, and we'll be having a sale on them this week — \$20.00 each, for a little piece of living and uplifting art!

\$20.00
each

NEW STUFF

Throughout the store, we have highlighted some flourless items that taste great, whether you have a gluten intolerance or not. Here are a few of our feature items this week. In our freezer, you will find Glutino White or Multigrain Sandwich Bread Reg. \$6.99 each. We have Thaiyada Brown Rice Pasta (Penne, Elbows, and Spirals) Reg. \$3.69-\$4.29 each) and Mary's Gluten Free Crackers (Original, Herb, Onion and Black Pepper) Reg. \$6.69 each.

25% OFF
THIS WEEK

This Friday from 11:00-3:00, we will have Sheldon Creek Dairy sampling their Farm Fresh Milk and Yoghurts. Their milk is the most natural product on the market and easily digestible. Tastes GRRreat!

—WHAT'S— BAKING THIS WEEK?

EVERYTHING FLOURLESS...

FLOURLESS CHOCOLATE CAKE • \$15.95

Delicious, rich, chocolatey brownie-like cake, made with only four ingredients: dark chocolate, eggs, sugar and butter. Topped with a mixture of whipped cream and sour cream, and fresh berries.

FLOURLESS CUPCAKES • \$3.49

Just like our flourless chocolate cake but topped with dark chocolate mousse.

WHITE CHOCOLATE MOUSSE CAKE • \$22.95

Perfect pairing of white chocolate mousse layered with flourless chocolate cake.

TURTLE CHEESECAKE • \$15.95

Pecan and walnut crust filled with cream cheese mix, marshmallows, ganache, candied pecans and caramel. Ganache topping, with a turtle, of course!

MINI STRAWBERRY CHEESECAKE • \$3.49

Also with a pecan and walnut crust, and the filling is made with pureed strawberries, a bit of Grand Marnier, and orange zest. Glazed strawberries on top.

CRÈME BRÛLÉES • \$4.50

Instead of the ever popular vanilla, we are making two more "exotic" seasonal flavours this week:

Pumpkin — pureed pumpkin, drop of Brandy, and all the pumpkin spices.

Maple Rosemary — Fresh rosemary steeped in whipping cream, flavoured with maple syrup. This has absolutely sublime flavour!

SMALL RASPBERRY TRUFFLE FLAN • \$12.95

We make the flan bottoms with butter, brown sugar and nuts, then fill it with a ganache of raspberry pureed and framboise mix. It is very rich, just like a chunk of wonderful chocolate truffle. And a little goes a long way!

All these items, while quantities last.

25% OFF
THIS WEEK

SPECIALS IN EFFECT FROM THURSDAY TO CLOSING SUNDAY, SEPT. 22nd

Hours: Mon. - Fri. 8:00-8:00

Sat. 8:00-6:00 - Sun. 9:00-6:00

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