

Clint Eats



By Clint Hamblin



Restaurant owner Wioletta Zywna (right) and her chef partner Peppino

New Restaurants

DaVinci Ristorante

Most new restaurants open with a bang, but first-time restaurant owner Wioletta Zywna and her talented chef partner Peppino have quietly opened DaVinci Ristorante featuring classic, rustic Italian cuisine at their 162 Columbus Avenue location in the South End of Boston. "We wanted to make sure that everything was perfect and working according to plan before we started promoting our new restaurant," Zywna said. And close to perfection is what you'll find at DaVinci Ristorante.

The decor distinctly depicts Leonardo DaVinci with representations of the great artist's drawings and art pieces cleverly incorporated into every aspect of this eatery. Cocktails are named after DaVinci's works including The Mona

Lisa, The Last Supper or The Madonna Martini. Menu items include freshly made pasta, desserts and bread including a superior Focaccia served with a zucchini spread and extra virgin olive oil infused with rosemary herbs. You won't be able to stop eating the rigatoni with bolognese sauce. The salt content so often overdone in many restaurants is under control at DaVinci's. Whether a portabella mushroom and cheese appetizer, the perfectly cooked gnocchi with diced fresh tomatoes or baked cod, the filet mignon or the freshly made desserts, everything is perfectly seasoned.

But the food is not the only attraction at DaVinci's. Chef Peppino is quite the personality, frequently visiting customers' tables to see how dinner is going. At the end of a meal, many guests travel to the back of the restaurant to shake Peppino's hand offering congratulations for a great



Oceanaire's Raw Bar



Taj Boston team: Claude Dubois, director of food and beverage; Franck Steigerwald, executive chef; Ranjit Phillipose, hotel manager; and David Gibbons, general manager

dining experience.

Cafeteria Boston

When you think of a cafeteria, images of turkey à la king being served on long tables in an institutional environment may come to mind but the newly opened Cafeteria Boston located at 279A Newbury Street in the Back Bay has redefined the cafeteria image to include upscale modern cuisine served in a sleek and well-designed environment.

Serving Italian-American cuisine, executive chef Laurence Scotti has put together a fun and innovative menu including a hearty and delicious butternut squash soup. One of Scotti's triumphs includes house-made gnocchi served with braised short ribs that melt in your mouth. Have a piece of bread handy to wipe the brown sauce from the bowl. This dish is truly delicious but the real standout was the lobster mashed potatoes served with sea bass. The potatoes take on the flavor of the lobster and with huge chunks of our favorite New England shellfish jetting out from the mound of mash, this dish is a great reason to make a reservation.

and reintroduce Palm classics. How about a 20-ounce dry-aged USDA Prime Bone-In New York Strip Steak or a surf and turf with the tenderest baked lobster you've ever eaten?

New executive chef Bill Bemis jumped ship from Boston's McCormick & Schmick's to join the Palm team and has added a chunky steak tartare along with several other items. When asked why the baked lobster was so moist and delicious, Bemis replied, "A spoonful of half-and-half or cream drizzled over the uncooked lobster before hitting the oven gives a moist and creamy consistency." Bemis left out the "to die for" part as this cooking tip elevates a baked and typically dry lobster to a heavenly state.

Oceanaire

The Tiffany's of Seafood is about to open at 40 Court Street in Boston. Oceanaire has taken over the main floor of the former US Trust bank where they spent a ton of money on renovations and are about to open this historic property on Thursday, January 24. The brass and marble building may suggest upscale dining but a Heinz Ketchup bottle on every table strongly indicates a casual and fun eating experience. Varieties of shellfish are offered daily as executive chef Dan Enos creates his specialties, from littleneck clams and linguica to huge Chesapeake Bay style lumpmeat crab cakes served with mustard mayonnaise. While seafood is the thing, a small menu of steakhouse entrees is also available.



The Palm's Baked Lobster

Taj's First Anniversary

Resetting the bar for one of the finest parties in Boston, Taj executive chef Franck Steigerwald, has outdone himself with a spectacular one year anniversary party.

Imagine giant ice-carved bowls with treasures and decorations from the sea all frozen into the bowl, each holding huge amounts of raw oysters, littleneck clams, shrimp and perfectly prepared lobster. Indian food, sushi tables, cheese displays and a dessert table featuring little pieces of edible artwork were plentiful.

New Menu

The Palm Restaurant located within Boston's Westin Marriott has been in business for 12 years and is now expanding its menu to include new innovative dishes

Valentine's Day Dinners

The Museum of Fine Arts is offering a Valentine's Day dinner featuring Bravo chef Jacqueline Kelly's special menu of three Valentine's Day dinners on Wednesday, February 13, Thursday, February 14 and Friday, February 15 with each dinner accompanied by live music. For more information, visit www.mfa.org.

Not to be outdone, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum will celebrate this lovers' holiday on Thursday, February 14 by hosting its second annual Venetian Valentine event featuring signature cocktails, hors d'oeuvres and desserts with live music from the courtyard and an Art of Romance tour of the galleries. For more information, call 566-5643.

What Boston restaurant serves your favorite dish or cocktail? Tell me all about it: clint@hbsboston.com