

FLORIDA WEEKLY CUISINE

Latitude takes over where Café Italia left off



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The Naples branch of Café Italia is no more, but a new restaurant run by a familiar face opened in the same space April 18.

Chef Ross Peterson, who opened Roy's Bonita Springs and then went on to create Syrah and Trilogy in Naples, has opened Latitude Restaurant and Piano Bar, serving fusion cuisine, a host of libations and live entertainment every night but Sunday.

"It's like having a touch of Fifth (Avenue South), Third (Street South) and Mercato in your backyard," says Mr. Peterson. "We're trying to do a smart, casual local hangout."

The dining room is sleek and contemporary, a place to have a full meal, while he and his partners (Mark and Britta Schulze and David Ogilvie) have added some TVs in the bar so patrons can watch a game or the news while having drinks and a light bite.

The menu includes some familiar classics and some innovative fusion dishes. A sampling includes: Not Your Momma's Meatloaf with crispy leeks and porcini gravy; Maine lobster mac and cheese with pretzel crust and truffle essence; an Old World charcuterie platter; lobster and roasted radish bisque; braised lamb, smoked gouda and roasted tomato flatbread; jamon-crusted veal cutlet with arugula, manchego cheese and roasted pepper coulis; and U-10 day boat scallop kabob with mint scented cream and demi drizzle.

Appetizers run \$7-\$14; entrees are \$16-\$34.

Latitude serves lunch and dinner, opening at 11 a.m. daily. It's at Naples Walk, 2500 Vanderbilt Beach Road. Call 596-5600 or visit www.latitude-naples.com.

Norman Love news: Part 1

The much-awaited Naples location of Norman Love Confections opened

COURTESY PHOTO

Chocolate artisans crafted this sculpture for Norman Love Confections' "Bunnies for Babies" fundraiser.



earlier this month in Parkshore Plaza, 3747 U.S. 41 North, next door to U.S.S. Nemo. Like the original Fort Myers location, the shop is decorated in lush chocolate hues that pair nicely with the rich chocolates, pastries, sipping chocolate, cappuccinos, cookies, brownies and all the other goodies sold.

Mr. Love plans to introduce gelatos soon and has visions of adding a dessert bar at which a chef conjures up goodies while patrons watch.

The store is open from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday. For details, call 687-7215.

Norman Love news: Part 2

Four winners enjoyed an abundance of Easter chocolate after their entries earned them creations from Norman Love Confections in the store's sixth annual "Bunnies for Babies" fundraiser. Entrants paid \$5 each for a chance to take home a chocolate centerpiece. Proceeds will go toward Community Cooperative Ministries Inc.'s new nutritional program, called CCMI Food Factory.

The winners were Meghan Newton, Kelly DeBoy, Norma DeSonia and Lisu Javedan.

Norman and Mary Love, who own and operate the chocolate business, participated in their first fundraiser for CCMI two years ago.

"It brought us an awareness of how many people in our community go to bed hungry each day," Mr. Love says. "This is one of the ways we hope to change that."

Norman Love Confections is at 11380 Lindbergh Blvd., Fort Myers; 561-7215; 3747 Tamiami Trail, Naples; 687-7215.

The website is www.normanloveconfections.com.

NCEF distributes funds at festive event

The Naples Children & Education Foundation, the organization that presents the wildly successful annual Naples Winter Wine Festival, held a soiree earlier this month at the Naples Botanical Garden to distribute some \$8 million of the funds it raised at this year's festival. To add some spice to the event, members of the Naples Originals, locally owned and operated restaurants, held a food fest featuring some of the restaurants' specialties.



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Isabel Pozo Polo, co-owner and executive chef at IM Tapas, lavishes her roasted beet Napoleons with balsamic reduction and parsley extra virgin olive oil during the NCEF event at the Naples Botanical Garden.



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Tony Ridgway watches for a reaction as Jerry Nichols samples his marinated leg of lamb at the NCEF event

chef/owner Michael Mir and his Bha! Bha! Persian Bistro staff served braised lamb with plums and butternut squash; co-owners and chefs Isabel Pozo Polo and Mary Shipman from IM Tapas dished out their roasted beet Napoleon with Catalan Capri chevre, Serrano lardons and pine nuts as well as shrimp in garlic sauce; Tony Ridgway, the chef/owner of Ridgway Bar & Grill, offered ginger, soy, garlic and

rosemary marinated leg of lamb and fresh apple galette with cinnamon gelato; Bamboo Café co-owner Lisa Boet dished up Provencale pink Gulf shrimp with garlic and shallots; and Chef Brian Roland and the M Waterfront Grille team offered tamar braised beef short ribs with parsnip-ratoot puree.

Other participating restaurants — whose food I simply wasn't able to get to — included Bayside Seafood Grill & Bar, Bleu Provence, Ciao Ristorante, Gourmet Catering, KC American Bistro and The Real Macaw.

You can try these dishes and more at these accomplished local establishments. Check out www.naplesoriginals.com for details.

Raw food classes resume in June

Holistic health and fitness coach Bethany Tait is taking her raw food preparation classes to Jubilee Chiropactic at 6291 Naples Blvd. starting in June. The new space will allow her to display recipes on a large television screen while she talks.

A raw food diet consists of fresh fruits, vegetables, sea veggies, nuts and seeds. Ms. Tait offers easy-to-make recipes such as collard green wraps, pesto portabello and grapefruit avocado salad as well as raw chocolate mousse, to name just a few.

The next class takes place from 5-6 p.m. Saturday, June 4, at Jubilee Chiropactic. It's \$25 per person. For details, call 216-3468 or visit www.bethanytait.com.

Short subjects

■ **Chipotle Mexican Grill** has finally opened at Mercato, marking the chain's first location in Southwest Florida. On the menu: tacos, burritos, salads and bowls with a choice of meat or vegetarian. All meat used is naturally and humanely raised without added antibiotics or hormones. It's also known for locally sourcing vegetables when possible. It's open from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily. Call 254-1292 or visit www.chipotle.com.

■ Amy Wojcik, Naples born and raised, has opened **Empire Bagel Factory** at 3802 Tamiami Trail E. It features the same fresh-baked bagels, muffins and other goodies served at the Marco Island location she has operated for the past three years. It opens daily at 6:30 a.m. and serves breakfast and lunch. Call 417-1357.

■ **Saffron**, the terrific but hard-to-find Indian restaurant that's done business on Pine Ridge Road, has closed. The owners have assured me they will reopen soon in a new location. Stay tuned. ■