DINING

Picano's celebrates 10th year

BY ETHEL SIMMONS
STAFF WRITER

Diners at Picano's Italian Restaurant & Lounge are already sampling some of the dishes that will be on the new menu being planned by chef William Hall.

The popular Troy restaurant that owner Dominic Picano says appeals to "all the Italian food lovers" is in its 10th year. Chef Hall — who returned to the restaurant three months ago, after six years as partner in two other Detroit-area Italian restaurants — has been featuring entrees from the new menu as daily specials.

"It's going to have a lot of new, exciting things. We're going to feature more regional Italian specialties," Hall said. Among these are Tuscan grills, with fish, wild game or steaks, flavored in infused olive oils.

The wine list, which offers a wide selection of Italian and California wines, also is being redone.

Picano, who used to own a carryout pizza shop in Detroit, opened his sit-down restaurant after moving to Troy. Also working with him at the restaurant is his wife, Brenda, and their two daughters, Tina and Cristina.

JIM RIDER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Popular restaurant: *Chef William Hall (left) with Dominic Picano at Picano's, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary.*

Romantic dinner

In February, Picano dreamed up the idea of offering a romantic dinner for two. Now it's a regular feature on the menu. The meal, which costs $25 per person, includes hot and cold hors d'oeuvres, entrees and dessert.

Chef Hall serves family-style platters of pasta — penne, in vodka sauce, and bucatini (resembling macaroni but with the double thickness of spaghetti) - and a combination of medallions of tenderloin, salmon and lamb chops, or whatever looks good to him at the market.

Sauteed wild mushrooms, roasted peppers, hot pepper shrimp, olives and cheeses are on the appetizer platter. Dessert is gelati with fruit sauteed in Italian liqueur.

Picano's is now making its own gelati, the Italian ice cream, that Hall said is "higher in flavor and lower in fat. It's six-seven percent butterfat."

The romantic dinner is served in the Caesar's room, where white cloths are on the tables for both lunch and dinner. Two other, more informal rooms, catering to families, are the nonsmoking room, Montecassino, named after Picano's hometown in Italy, and the DiPiazza room.

Added rooms

When Picano's first opened, there were two dining rooms seating 175. Silvio's bar, seating 40 at bar stools and tables, and Caesar's were added in 1989.

Picano is happy to have Hall back in the kitchen. "He's very creative," he said. The owner had told Hall there was "an open door" whenever he wanted to return.

An interesting dish Hall prepares for lunch and dinner is Chicken Involtini, a pounded chicken breast rolled with herbs, prosciutto Italian ham and fontina cheese, browned and sliced. "It looks like pinwheels and is served with fresh herb savory sauce," he said.

Another noteworthy entree is veal with sauteed eggplant and marsala, mushrooms and fontina cheese. The restaurant is also introducing risotto, the Italian rice dish.

For lunch or dinner, soup or salad comes with all pasta entrees. A side dish of pasta, as well as soup or salad, accompanies fish and meat entrees.

To complete a meal, there are also Italian tiramisu or cannoli for dessert. And, Picano said, "We make the best cappuccino and espresso in Michigan."

Frequent diner

"I eat here a lot because I enjoy the food. It's always tasty and up to my satisfaction," said Eunice Schmidt of Troy, who was having whitefish at lunch recently. She was dining with Madeline Spence of Troy who, when asked how her salmon was, with a mouthful could only say, "Ummm!" And perhaps that says it all.

Just finishing his salad before the main course was served, Bill Johnstone of Ypsilanti, who works in Troy, declared, "The salad was surprisingly good. In some Italian restaurants the vinaigrette dressing is too spicy or bite-y, but this was just right. The vegetables were good. The lettuce was fresh. Also it was chilled nice."

Irma Tetrauld of Royal Oak, who was having lunch with Johnstone, said she often has meals at Picano's. "I've had really good experiences with them. I like the restaurant, and I think the waitresses are very nice."

Picano's Restaurant and lounge

- **Address:** 3775 Rochester Road, at corner of Rochester Road and Troywood, at 16/4 Mile Road, in Troy
- **Phone number:** (810) 689-8050
- **Hours:** Monday-Thursday 11 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.; Friday 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.; Saturday 4-11 p.m. (during August only), noon to 11 p.m. (starting in September); Sunday 1-9:30 p.m.
- **Menu synopsis:** Italian food including veal, pasta, chicken, seafood. Eight different specials daily. Full bar.
- **Vegetarian friendly?** Yes.
- **Highlights:** Music seven nights a week. Italian Night on Monday, four musicians led by Eddie DeSantis with singer Marie Mariotto. Tuesday-Sunday, Italian vocalist Pino Morelli.
- **Cost:** Lunch $6.95-$11.95, dinner $8.25-$16.95.
- **Reservations needed?** For parties of six or more.
- **Credit cards:** All major cards accepted.

RESTAURANT SPECIALS

Send items to be considered for publication to: Keely Wygonik, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150, or by fax (313)591-7279.

New restaurant

Relish
Newest Unique Restaurant Corporation restaurant, 34555 W. 12 Mile Road (between Farmington Road and Drake), Farmington Hills, sneak preview on 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 2 to benefit the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute, formerly the Michigan Cancer Foundation. Strolling supper features selections from the Relish menu, a concept that combines healthy cooking techniques with a variety of relishes. Tickets $40 per person, cash bar will be offered. All proceeds go to the institute.
(810) 443-5320

Special events

Asian Feast
Unique Restaurant Corporation Corporate Chef Jim Barnett has designed this year's Asian Feast. It will be offered 7 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 24 at Trattoria Bruschetta inside Novi's Hotel Baronette, 27790 Novi Road, (810) 305-5210 and 7 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 26 at Sebastian's Grill inside the Somerset Collection at 2745 Big Beaver Road in Troy, (810) 649-6625. The cost is $35.95 per person, not including tax and gratuity. Call for reservations. Menu includes hot and sour soup with griddled chicken dumplings, Ramen wrapped Maine lobster with Oriental greens, and Asian seared Angus Tenderloin with roasted shallots.

Palio
Restaurant in downtown Ann Arbor announces the kick off of the first Rooftop Tailgate Party season for home University of Michigan football games starting with the Pigskin Classic on August 24. Parties begin two hours before the game and feature *Palio's classic football buffet. The restaurant at 347 South Main Street,* is near parking structures and within walking distance of the football stadium. All Rooftop Tailgate Parties are open to the public. The cost is $20 at the door.
(313) 930-6100

Dakota Inn Rathskeller
Seventh annual Chili Cook-off to benefit Leader Dogs for the Blind Foundation, 1 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 26, 17324 John R. Street, Detroit. Twenty-five teams will compete for the blue ribbon. (313) 607-9722

The Water Club Grill
"Politics is Murder," 7 p.m. Friday, Aug. 25, an evening of murder, mystery, laughs and food. Cost $32.50 per person includes tax and gratuity, interactive murder mystery performance, four course dinner. The restaurant is at 39500 Ann Arbor Road, Plymouth. Limited seating, call for reservations. (313) 454-0660

Kingsley Inn Dinner Theatre
RJO Productions presents "Mass Appeal by Bill C. Davis, Saturdays through Jan. 27, at the Inn 1475 Woodward (south of Long Lake) Bloomfield Hills. Dinner 7:30 p.m. followed by show. Cost $29.95 per person. Includes full course dinner, show, one drink per person. Entree selections: chicken breast in cherry sauce, roast pork tenderloin, broiled salmon. (810) 642-0100

Farmington Philharmonic eager to serve at Big Boy

Big Boy and the Farmington Area Philharmonic are looking to make beautiful music together 6-9 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 27, as the Farmington Big Boy hosts a Celebrity Server Night to benefit the orchestra.

The restaurant at 20788 Farmington and Eight Mile Road, will welcome many local notables.

"We're happy to be able to provide this opportunity for our customers to support a worthwhile cause while enjoying a great meal," said Tony Michaels, vice president of marketing for Elias Brothers Restaurants, Inc.

All tips collected by celebrity servers, including Farmington Area Philharmonic music director Karen Nixon Lane and Farmington Observer editor Tom Baer, will be given to the orchestra, and Big Boy will donate 10 percent of the day's total sales.

"One of our main goals is to introduce youngsters to classical music," said Lane. "And, like Big Boy Restaurants, we are very family oriented. We are pleased to have the opportunity to host our event with a company whose name is synonymous with family fun and community involvement."

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