

DINING

At 2nd City's Risata, food is serious business

BY CHRISTINA FUOCO
STAFF WRITER

Risata may be located inside the Second City Building, but Executive Chef George Nicholas Kalergis takes his restaurant very seriously.

A stickler for quality, Kalergis searches out the freshest of foods at places like Spaghetti Bendiera in Windsor, Mama Mucci in Plymouth, and Eastern Market. He's even working closely with a fish house to learn proper storage of fish.

"If the fish isn't up to par, it's not going to be on the menu that night," said Kalergis, who lives in Sylvan Lake with his wife Ellen Meyer Kalergis, a local pastry chef.

"I like to excite the palate with rich, clean flavors and products done simply and to perfection," he added.

Risata, which means "burst of laughter" in Italian, serves up contemporary cuisine with an Italian flair. Appetizers range from "Housemade Minestrone

Risata
Where: Inside The Second City Building, 2301 Woodward Ave. (next door to the Fox Theatre), Detroit.
Hours: 5-8 p.m. Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays; 5-11 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays. The Circle Bar is open until 1:30 a.m.
Credit: All major credit cards are accepted.
Information: (313) 966-2222.

Soup" (\$3.50) to "Garlic Foecacia" (\$6.95), served with chopped herbs, cranio sauce and fresh rock shrimp.

"Traditional Caesar Salad" is joined on the menu by "Grilled Salmon Salad" with cucumbers, Bermuda onions, calamata olives, pepperoncini, and balsamic/whole-grain mustard vinaigrette (\$9.50), and "Fresh Mozzarella, Roma Tomato and Vidalia Onion Salad" tossed with

basil oil, pecorino romano cheese and aged balsamic vinegar (\$5.75).

Pastas are on the menu, of course. "Free-Form Giant Ravioli" (\$17.95), stuffed with seasoned lobster meat, artichoke hearts, ricotta cheese and sweet cream basil sauce, is a twist on the traditional dish. For vegetarians, whole-wheat linguine (\$11.95) is tossed with oyster and shitake mushrooms, sundried tomatoes, roasted peppers and pine nuts.

"Pan-Seared Medallions of Beef" made with roasted garlic sauce, grilled tomatoes, garlic-mashed potatoes and mixed vegetables (\$18.95) is among the highlights of the entrees.

"Horseradish and Potato-Crusted Whitefish" (\$13.95), "Char-Grilled Center Cut Pork Chops" with Caribbean barbecue glaze, mango/cilantro salsa and onion-fried mashed potatoes (\$12.95) are among the other items on the menu.

The restaurant decor is just as

colorful as the menu. Resembling a loft, Risata, decorated in red purple, mustard, and celadon, boasts a mix of slat and bare wood floors, brick walls, steel girders, painted concrete ceilings and exposed duct work. Windows that reach 17 feet high allow for nice views of the theater district.

The focal point of the restaurant is the bar. In the shape of a circle, it is made of honey-colored wood and topped with stone. Bar stools in brilliant red paint and purple leather line the bar. A 10-foot custom-designed chandelier made of wood, steel and hand-made glass illuminates above.

The kitchen at the Circle Bar is open until 1:30 a.m. offering typical bar fare (burgers, chicken wings, pizza, jalapeno peppers) and other items like breaded ravioli with tomato-garlic dipping sauce (\$5.95), oven-roasted mushrooms with garlic, roasted peppers and boursain cheese (\$5.95), and chicken foecacia sandwich with roasted peppers, basil mayonnaise and mozzarella

cheese (\$7.95).

Kalergis, who trained at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, N.Y., came to Risata earlier this year from Meadowbrook Country Club in Northville, where he prepared

classic French and American cuisine. The Dearborn Heights native has also been the executive chef at Capraro's Italian Diner in Troy, and the sous chef at the Adirondacks in Washington, D.C.



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