

DINING

Andiamo Osteria opens with innovations in Royal Oak

BY ELEANOR HEALD
SPECIAL WRITER

In the 10 years since opening his ever-growing succession of popular Andiamo restaurants, CEO Joe Vicari has managed to capture in-market share on the east, north and west sectors of metro Detroit. With the opening of his second "Andiamo Osteria" in Royal Oak, the most southern location, he's gotcha covered.

Royal Oak is the most innovative of the eateries. First of all, it's Royal Oak. A stretch of three blocks along Main Street, south of 11 Mile Road, has taken on the look of Miami's South Beach. There's no ocean, no sand, no palm trees, but on the weekend, you can't see the pavement for the throngs of people.

Akin to South Beach, yes, but Andiamo Osteria has a stylish New York feel. No neon signs, no head-turning eye candy. Just soothing earth tones that sing a distinguished harmony.

Main Street in Royal Oak is about people having fun. Nowadays, that's mostly eating. What the dining scene lacked was a restaurant with an upscale "look," yet a casualness that puts diners at ease — sleek style, casual tablecloths, wide windows, classy bar and a variety of seating from high-top tables to comfy booths.

Andiamo Osteria has brought this to Royal Oak. You'll feel comfortable here in jeans and a pressed shirt, although your greeter, operating partner Paul Kelly or Joe Vicari, will be natti-

er.

You'll quickly pick up the beat that service is professional, food is serious, weekend entertainment is top-drawer and everyone is dialed-in to giving you a great dining experience. To put it in Vicari's words, "we offer upscale dining that's not at all stuffy."

What's amazing is that 76 percent of diners who have "discovered" Andiamo Osteria since its opening in May, are first-timers to an Andiamo.

But herein lies a benefit. It's not yet as crowded as Andiamo West. You can get a table and not stand three-deep at the bar. It's also more casual.

While the theme at an Andiamo is Italian, they are not cookie cutters. Signature dishes are on every menu, but new for Royal Oak are antipasti Gamberi con Melanzana al Forno, fresh shrimp, sauteed over grilled eggplant in a light sauce.

Also inaugural are Insalata al Salmone, mixed greens tossed with raspberry vinaigrette, topped with an array of grilled vegetables and grilled salmon; Capellini al Salmone, fresh seared Atlantic salmon with spinach, mushrooms, tomato fillet and onions in a white wine sauce atop imported angel hair pasta; and Bucatini alla Vodka, imported bucatini noodles tossed with pancetta, tomato, basil and onion in a vodka sauce.

Debuting too are Petto di Pollo alla Modenese, chicken breast breaded and topped with prosciutto, tomato sauce and fontina cheese and Pesce Bianco alla

Andiamo Osteria
Where: 129 S. Main Street (corner of Second Street), Royal Oak (248) 582-9300.

Hours: Lunch 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday-Friday; Dinner 4-11 p.m. Monday-Thursday, and until midnight Friday and Saturday; 4-10 p.m. Sunday.

Menu: Eclectic array of authentic Italian dishes from antipasti through desserts. Housemade pastas, signature sauces and veal dishes are specialties.

Cost: Lunch entrees \$5.95-\$16.95; Dinner entrees \$12-21. Reservations: Accepted, but only for four or more on Friday and Saturday.

Credit cards: All majors accepted.

An Andiamo near you:

■ Andiamo Italia Ristorante: 7096 East 14 Mile Road, Warren, (810) 268-3200.

■ Trattoria Andiamo: 20930 Mack Ave., Grosse Pointe Woods, (313) 886-9933.

■ Andiamo Lakeside Bistro: 24026 Jefferson Ave., St. Clair Shores, (810) 773-7770.

■ Andiamo West: 6676 Telegraph Road (at Maple), Bloomfield Hills, (248) 865-9300.

■ Andiamo Osteria: 401 Main Street (at Fourth), Rochester (248) 601-9300.

Andiamo Uncorked
Operating partner Paul Kelly suggests pairing these wines with the most popular Andiamo Osteria dishes.

■ Insalata alla Salmone — 1996 Van Duzer Riesling, Oregon;

1996 Talbot Logan Chardonnay

■ Farfalle con Conocchini di Pollo — 1996 Ornellaia La Voite, 1997 J. Lohr Riverstone Chardonnay

■ Filetto di Manzo alla Andiamo — 1995 Batasolo Barolo, 1996 Beaulieu Cabernet Sauvignon

■ Filetto di Vitello alla Fiorentina — 1997 Veramonte Primus Merlot, Chile, 1994 Produttori Barberesco

■ Pesce Bianco alla Andiamo — 1998 Mezza Corona Pinot Grigio, 1997 Farina Fincelli

Andiamo, whitefish baked on a seasoned plank and served with Duchesse potatoes.

And catch this! Riba. Costollette di Maiale alla Rossa are marinated baby back ribs, glazed

with Osteria B.B.Q. sauce. How do say finger lickin' good in Italian?

Executive chef Steve Kuclo and Master Chef Aldo Ottaviani, Andiamo's corporate executive



STAFF PHOTO BY JON KUCLO

At your service: Executive chef Steve Kuclo (left) and operating partner Paul Kelly present (from left) Linguine Con Verdure di Stagione and Filetto di Vitello alla Fiorentina at Andiamo Osteria.

chef, worked for over four months to create and perfect new dishes. They were offered as specials at other Andiamo locations to get diner opinions. Once positively reviewed, they made it to the new Royal Oak Andiamo Osteria menu.

Kuclo has worked in an Andiamo since the first, founded by Vicari in 1990. "After attending restaurant management school in Kentucky, I trained under Chef Aldo," he explained. "My mother is Italian and when I

first worked as a chef, I phoned her for recipes. Now she calls me."

Matching the stylish ambience, flavorful signature dishes and new menu items is the wine list, specially selected by Paul Kelly. If you can't decide on a wine, try one of the four flights, two-ounce pours of three different wines. Once you decide on the wine you like, you can either order it by the glass or bottle. I like Flight 3, Italian reds, a very savvy trio for \$7.25.

DINING AT THE MGM GRAND DETROIT CASINO

If you go to the MGM Grand Detroit Casino hungry, be prepared to wait, at least until things settle down. All restaurants are on the second level.

Neyla and the Hollywood Brown Derby are booked for the next three to four weeks, call (313) 393-7777 for reservations, and information about cancellations.

Here are your options:

■ Neyla — A Mediterranean Grill

Open: 6 p.m. to 1 a.m. Monday-Wednesday; 5 p.m. to 3 a.m. Thursday-Friday; noon to 1 a.m. Sunday.

Seats: 100 people, including bar area

Reservations: Recommended. Menu: Middle Eastern and Mediterranean dishes with an American twist.

Cost: Entrees \$14.95 to \$28.95

■ Hollywood Brown Derby

Open: 6-11 p.m. Sunday-Thursday; 6 p.m. to midnight Sunday.

Seats: 170 people, including private dining room

Reservations: Recommended.

Menu: Steakhouse fare, fresh seafood, two pasta dishes, and roasted chicken. Some dishes served tableside. A highlight is the three pound whole Maine lobster.

Cost: Entrees \$15.95 to \$59.95

■ MGM Grand Buffet

Open: 24 hours a day, every day. Brunch 11 p.m. to 11 a.m.; lunch 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.; dinner 4-11 p.m.

Seats: 500 people

Reservations: Not accepted. Check in to get a voucher. You'll be notified of your seating time.

Cost: \$14.95 brunch and lunch; \$17.95 dinner

Menu: All-you-can-eat buffet with nine food stations including American Grills, The Bayou, The Wok and Italian specialties. Buffet offers over 64 items and over 66 side dishes.



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