

Ciao serves Italian cuisine with California flair

BY TAMARA WARREN
CORRESPONDENT

CIAO

What: Pan-Italian cuisine with a touch of West Coast couture.
Where: 1024 Monroe, off of Michigan Ave in Dearborn. (313) 274-CIAO
Hours: Dinner 5-11 p.m. Monday-Saturday; lunch 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Tuesday-Friday. Closed Sunday.

Adding European flavor to Dearborn's quaint downtown district is Ciao. Ciao is an artfully approached, Italian nook that is more a reflection of the modern European eatery than a traditional Italian American restaurant.

Fresh vegetables offset the sauces, which are decidedly lighter than a typical spaghetti and meatballs side dish. Olive oil is strongly favored in most of the dishes mixed with fragrant basil, capers and garlic spices. Ciao is Dearborn restaurateur Kasey Chamount's conception. Chamount also owns Kasey's Salad Bar and Grill, the International Cafe and Kasey's Catering. Chamount, who was born in Milan, has put together an authentic display of Italian culture.

"First I want them to enjoy the ambiance, I want them to forget they are sitting in Michigan and Dearborn," Chamount says. "The scent and sites of Italy encompass Ciao. Chef Fredrico Karou hails from Rome and Italian designer Antoni Pipolo has done work at Vatican, Chamount says.

"He now works from Disney Europe. He was using the New World, exposed aluminum, and Old World, wood burning stoves and frescos."

"The décor gives the place a sunny feel, perhaps reminiscent of a Tuscan garden."

"It should suit the menu. It's not traditional Italian," Chamount says.

Pastas are inventive. Bocconcini Bochinara combines rigatoni with mussels and scallops in parmesan cream sauce with fresh herbs and asiago cheese. The Linguine de Vodka is a popular choice. (Vodka is popular in the beverage form as well.)

"Vegetarians have options with Pappardelle di Verdure Alla "Ciao" — herb pasta with artichokes, sun-dried tomato, spinach and roasted peppers topped with gorgonzola tomato cream and asiago cheese.

"The nine selections of fish include a fusion dish — they're so popular these days — sashimi tuna steak and Chilean sea bass.



The bright, airy dining room at Ciao.



Ciao manager Abdul Elkadiri with Calamari Alla Griglia, citrus marinated and char' grilled, served with tomato concasse and drizzled with an herbed balsamic vinaigrette.

Meats include chicken tenders, veal medallions, rack of lamb and Angus beef. The veal chops are served with roasted peppers, spinach, gorgonzola cheese and a mushroom glaze.

Lighter fare and reasonably priced pizzas make fresh and haute cuisine accessible with sun dried tomato and goat cheese as toppings. The mango salad has become a popular option, Chamount says.

Desserts are homemade by an in-house pastry chef with bread pudding and traditional Italian tiramisu topping the list of favorites.

Soft drinks and espresso are on the menu along with a full bar. The wine list favors Italian wines, but there are several Napa Valley wines and a few French and German selections.

With fresh ingredients and well-prepared cuisine, the prices are reasonable with lunch averaging \$12 per person and dinner \$20 per person.

"There is a lack of upscale Italian restaurants with a Californian flair," Chamount says. Yet with mussels measured in kilos, Europe seems closer than the West Coast.

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