

Tavolino Della Nonna

By Charles Marcanetti

Singers often record songs that are an homage (from the French, meaning: special honor or respect shown or expressed publicly) to a mother or father, a wife, friend or loved one. Sometimes they record homages to famous people or heroes in their lives. Some books are dedicated to inspirational loved ones and some great works of art are inspired by loved ones. But, an entire restaurant? Yes, my friends, owners Edward Pozzuoli and Thomas Genduso, in association with Michael Joseph Rolchigo—a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, NY in 1996 (there is no more prestigious culinary institute in the world)—the head chef and loyal grandchild of a woman who inspired, encouraged and loved him in a magical way, have named their restaurant for this wonderful woman, Tavolino Della Nonna (Grandmother's Table). Following her passing, Michael asked for the eponymous kitchen table on which they shared countless meals with family and friends.



Tavolino Della Nonna
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When this soon-to-be-landmark in Coral Springs opened, out came Grandma's Table, and a sink, stove and "ice box" from the fifties. This re-creation of a life well lived exists at the entranceway of this truly special, wonderfully welcoming and sense-shattering authentic Italian eatery. Bring your grandmothers, bring your grandfathers, mothers, fathers, children, friends and loved ones; I assure you it will be one of many, many return visits.

There are television sets (state-of-the-art, and I tell you this so that you don't think the TV's are from the fifties, also) that play beautiful scenes of Italy and alternate with the The Godfather. There are little framed expressions on the tables (we had, "Grandparents are a little bit parent, a little bit teacher and a little bit best friends"). And, there are great wait-personnel. In our case it was Raphael. He was knowledgeable, unintrusive and alert to our every need.

We arrived at 5 p.m. and quite understandably, the restaurant was busy then and for the entire evening. Busy, yes, but not too noisy. It was inhabited by happy people, some even singing along to the nostalgic Italian music playing in the background. What a night! Come with me now, on a journey through a gourmet diner's meal to remember; a banquet fit for royalty but served as if we were family guests.

We started with taste-popping appetizers, followed by the most mouth-watering main dishes created anywhere in Coral Springs, and

then we feasted on desserts that would make the Italian and French pastry chefs of the world die of jealousy.

The homemade bread was worth the entire meal. It was crisp-crust and soft and sweet inside. It was accompanied by aged herbed olive oil or herbed tomato paste or (and this was absolutely fabulous), soft baked garlic/olive oil. Without a doubt you will order more...and more!

The first course was accompanied by a gentle bottle of 2004 Chardonnay by Carneros. At the same time we opened and allowed to breathe a delectable 2005 Barbera D'Alba by Mauro Veglio, a Chianti-like wine that didn't bite but maintained its legs (translation: mild and constant in flavor).

The appetizers started with Nonna's Meatballs (\$10.00). These authentic Italian treats were firm but tender, perfectly spiced and served with Mixed Baby Greens and soft, buttery Ricotta Cheese. And then came one of Tavolino Dell Nonna's many signature items, their Stuffed Pasta w/Pear and Blue Cheese (order it by asking for "Pear Pasta") (\$11.00). Let's face it, even though they make every type of pasta by hand (Cappellini, Spaghetti, Linguini, Penne and Rigatoni), and even though there is no local pasta that even comes close, there is still only so much one can do to pasta. Right? Wrong! The Pear Pasta is remarkable. It's unique. It's a food organized to perfectly balance each ingredient and I encourage you to sample this almost mysterious treat. For those of you who like "spicy" you are invited to approach with warning the Upstate N.Y. Specialty, Escarole Ala Michael (\$8.00). Tantalizing but smokin'!



Our main courses were perfectly portioned, perfectly heated, beautifully presented and indescribably delicious (but I'll try). The Snapper Almondine (\$21.00), is pan roasted and served with Amaretto Di Sorranno, Toasted Almonds and a Touch of Cream. It's a marvelous artistic expression that begs to be devoured; so we did. Next, we were served Chicken Marsala (\$18.00) and Veal Saltimbocca (\$22.00). You already know that I am on a crusade to have restaurant owners seek out humanely raised veal calves and, therefore, I seldom eat veal. This night I tasted just enough to inform each of you that Tavolino Della Nonna's makes a great Saltimbocca and if you're so inclined, indulge yourselves. Or, if poultry is more to your liking, try the Chicken Marsala. Each comes in the traditional dark sauce and has a sweet but authentic Italian flavor. The Marsala is served with Mushrooms, Onions, Hot and Sweet Peppers, Bacon, Sherry and Basil Marinara served over a bed of Rigatoni, and the Saltimbocca is served with Prosciutto, Sage and Mozzarella over Spinach. Everyone loved these dishes. For me however, the Shrimp Scampi (\$23.00), was the highlight. The shrimps were very large, sweet and crunchy, perfectly spiced, abundantly garlicky and drenched in a soft aged herbed olive oil and served on a bed of Linguini. I ordered a dinner sized plate of pasta, which in and of itself isn't on the menu, but I wanted to try one last homemade pasta to see if it was really consistently tender and light. It really was. So, I can recommend all of their pastas, which range from \$14.00 to \$19.00.

Finally, and as you know, I have in the past raved about a particular dessert at one restaurant or another. But here, Michael (yes, the same Michael who is the head chef, bread-maker, pasta-maker and dedicated grandson) is also the Pastry Chef. He is Harry Houdini and Albert Einstein rolled into one. He is a magician and genius who creates the most magnificent dessert treats found anywhere on any continent, let alone South Florida. There are two kinds of Cheesecakes however, that Michael doesn't make; specifically, Nana's Cheesecake and Nana's Ricotta Cheesecake. These are made by owner Ed Pozzuoli's mother-in-law, and should be world famous. We also had

Nana's Homemade Apple Cake. While Michael is the Master Pastry Chef he ought to tread lightly around those phenomenal creations. He however, does make the Chocolate Volcano Cake, the Crème Brulee, the Pignola (Pine Nuts) Cookies (with Almonds paste) and an assortment of other mouth-watering cookies and cakes. They range from \$4.00 to \$8.00 and must be the climax of your evening. Unless, of course, like us, you finish with a taste of Anisette or Sambouca, and then you're very, very finished. Ah, decadence! To all my local friends and loyal readers: this is the place to go!

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