

Simply Chic

Old favorites achieve star status at Bova Ristorante

By Denise Reynolds



WEST PALM BEACH

Clockwise from left: Peter Masiello enjoys some downtime before the evening rush; the dining room sits ready for patrons; Shrimp Saltimboca, one of Masiello's most popular dishes.

SPARKLE AND SHINE have always drawn the rich and fabulous to Boca Raton, 25 miles from West Palm Beach, especially in winter. But when the sun goes down, the “it” crowd lights up the night at **Bova Ristorante** (1450 N. Federal Hwy., 561.362.7407), a shimmering \$5.5 million showplace on Boca’s fashionable east side.

“Dining at Bova is an experience, like going to the theater,” says owner Tony Bova, who along with wife Laurie takes on the role of producer in what’s become the hottest see-and-be-seen spot north of South Beach. **Executive Chef Peter Masiello** agrees: “There is a certain wow factor when you walk into the dining room. You feel like you’re in Milan. You see the waterfall and the white marble tables and you say ‘Wow.’”

Bova’s interiors, like the people who luxuriate in them, are all about looking glamorous with seemingly little effort. White linen orbs of light suspended like celestial bodies illuminate individual tables and put patrons center stage. Courtships intensify on curvaceous tufted banquettes covered with pearlescent leather. The most coveted tables are surrounded by sheer white curtains or framed by aubergine

five to try

1 GiGi’s. 346 Plaza Real, Mizner Park, Boca Raton, 561.368.4488. You’ll find patio tables aplenty at this oyster bar and café located in an upscale shopping venue. On Thursdays the chef designs custom five-course tasting menus based on personal preference — then describes each surprise as he personally delivers it.

2 Six Tables. 112 NE 2nd St., Mizner Plaza, Boca Raton, 561.347.6260. It’s true: there really are just six tables. That’s why your dinner is served by reservation only.

3 32 East. 32 E. Atlantic Ave., Delray Beach, 561.276.7868. Stroll this trendy street and then settle in here for great eats. Expect a wait, as it’s always packed. The menu is reinvented daily.

4 Howley’s. 4700 S. Dixie Hwy., West Palm Beach, 561.833.5691. Chow down for less at this delightful diner that’s been cooking up killer comfort food for 58 years. Breakfast is always available.

5 Market Salamander. 155 N. County Road, Palm Beach, 561.659.6772. Grab and go, or pull up a seat at the culinary theater in this epicurean emporium, Palm Beach’s top spot for sourcing a seaside picnic meal. — D.R.

satin drapes. “The atmosphere created at Bova offers an essential backdrop to complement the dishes we serve,” Masiello observes. “We want people to get excited about food, and we really respect the sense of togetherness that food brings.” ➤

GO EAT

Masiello may have inherited his passion for food from his grandmother, who was born in the Campania region of Italy. She lived with the family when he was a young boy and did most of the cooking. "I watched the way she cooked and seasoned things," the chef recalls. "I love how food — the simple preparation of it — brings people together."

A graduate of the Culinary Institute of America, Masiello went on to train in the Italian kitchens of two Michelin-starred chefs: Nadia Santini of dal Pescatore, in Italy's Lombardy region, and Valentino Marcatili of San Domenico, near Bologna. Before teaming up with the Bovas, Masiello worked as a chef at Tony May's legendary New York restaurant San Domenico.

Masiello's kitchen turns out contemporary renditions of classic regional Italian dishes. "We start off with organic chicken, sauté it in extra-virgin olive oil, use the best tomatoes in the world — San Marzano — and we import *mozzarella di bufala* from Italy," he explains. "Not your everyday chicken parmesan."

Since family is where it all began for Masiello, he serves his *nuovo classico* food family-style on Sundays. The next three days, he spotlights Italian cuisine from a particular region, offering a three-course menu with optional wine pairings.

What resonates most with patrons, however, is the purity of tastes in Masiello's dishes: the sweet tartness of grilled Meyer lemons that accompany rosemary and roasted garlic-kissed baby artichokes; the flavor concentration in an

(THE HUNGRY TRAVELER)

Mac Memories

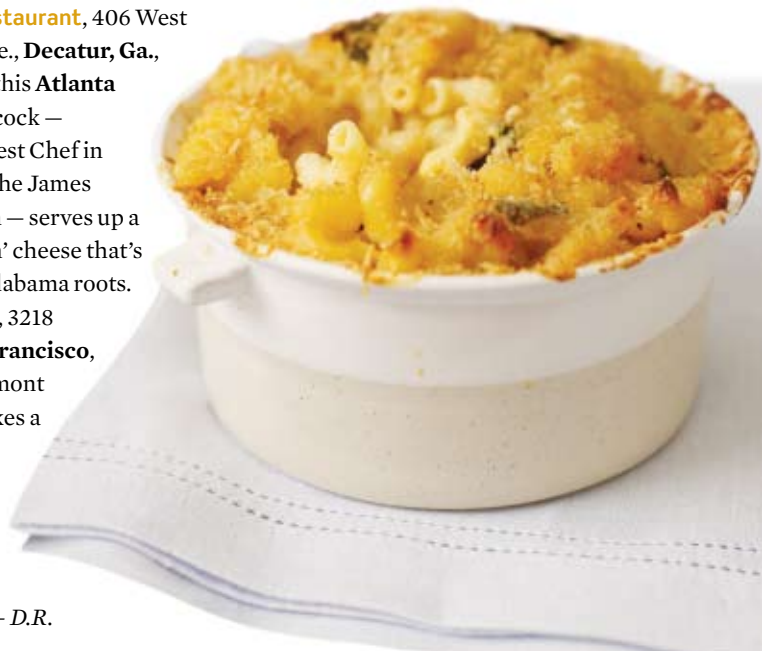
No doubt mom's macaroni and cheese is still tops in your book, but these creamy renditions may give her a run for her money.

Delilah's Southern Cuisine, Reading Terminal Market, 1136 Arch St., Philadelphia, 215.574.0929. Ever since Oprah dubbed this the best mac 'n' cheese, people have been lining up to eat the soulful cooking of transplanted Southerner Delilah Winder.

Watershed Restaurant, 406 West Ponce de Leon Ave., Decatur, Ga., 404.378.4900. In this Atlanta suburb, Scott Peacock — recently named Best Chef in the Southeast by the James Beard Foundation — serves up a comforting mac 'n' cheese that's true to his rural Alabama roots.

The Blue Plate, 3218 Mission St., San Francisco, 415.282.6777. Vermont white cheddar takes a backseat to wine-cured Spanish Drunken Goat cheese in this to-die-for rendition.

— D.R.



heirloom tomato *guazzetto* paired with *lagostinos* and rapini; the earthy intensity of exotic mushroom fricassee served with filet mignon and mascarpone mashed potatoes. An on-site organic garden provides fresh herbs, hot and sweet peppers, and tomatoes.

"Our dishes are very simple. Our

sauces are very simple," says Masiello, "Simple is always better." And at Boca's stylish Bova, simple isn't easy — it only looks that way.

Getting There: Continental offers daily nonstop service to West Palm Beach from its hubs in Houston, New York/Newark, and Cleveland.

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