

# EPICUREAN EPISODES

## Cucina Paradiso: Ristorante Italiano

There is always the air of excitement when a new restaurant opens in Petaluma. In this case, the excitement springs from the fact that one of our local favorites, Cucina Paradiso, has moved from their previous location of many years to a new spot in the heart of Downtown at 114 Petaluma Boulevard North. A lot of thought, talent and work went into the décor - warm and inviting mustard colored walls, wine country scenes, and pendant lighting above the stylish bar. Each table is adorned with fresh flowers - always a nice touch! We were pleased to see that the restaurant was completely full on the Saturday afternoon that we visited. The move has been a wonderful event for Executive Chef/Owner Dennis Hernandez and his talented chefs and staff.

As we perused the menu, we could smell the aroma of fresh garlic from the open exhibition kitchen and knew we had come to a special place. As on previous visits to Cucina Paradiso, we couldn't help but notice that there were diners of all ages. This is always a good sign, as younger and older diners are usually pretty picky. Our waiter, who was originally from Italy, added greatly to our enjoyment. He told us about the "Specials" and took our drink order. We ordered a bottle of Pelegrino Italian sparkling water to start and some wines by the glass. Then we were ready for some of Petaluma's best Italian Cuisine!!

Choosing first from among the Antipasti, we loved the Polenta Gratinata - soft polenta topped with assorted Italian cheeses. The presentation was lovely and the ingredients fresh as can be. Next we had the Antipasti Della Casa - a delicious Caprese

with fresh tomatoes, mozzarella, basil and local certified organic McEvoy Ranch extra virgin olive oil, as well as salumi, olives and eggplant. We also highly recommend the Carpaccio di Manzo - thinly sliced, raw filet mignon with extra virgin olive oil, capers, mustard, arugula and shaved parmesan. Very fresh and delicious.

Next, we had a soup and salad course. The Insalata Della Casa with mixed greens and sweet onions tossed with 12-year-old aged balsamic vinaigrette was excellent! We also loved the Zuppa Del Giorno, made with rustic eggplant and sweet bell peppers. It was served piping hot and was light, refreshing and subtle - just a wonderful soup.

Our next course was I Primi. We enjoyed both the Ravioli di Vitello - homemade ravioli filled with veal and spinach, prosciutto di Parma, asparagus and cream - and the Pasta Gnocchi di Spinaci with butter, sage, Parmigiano and light tomato sauce. Both melted in our mouths. The main courses, or I Secondi, were equally delicious. We really enjoyed the Scaloppini di Vitello con Funghi - a fabulous thin-pounded Veal Scaloppini with Porcini mushroom, Marsala wine sauce and a touch of cream. But the Maiale - Pork Tenderloin sautéed with prosciutto di Parma, porcini mushrooms, brandy and mushrooms - was perfectly prepared and our favorite!

Cucina Paradiso's Wine List includes both Italian

and California choices. We loved the fact that they bring the bottles to the table and pour wines by the glass. Our favorites included the 2007 La Crema Sonoma County Chardonnay (creamy and buttery), the 2007 Ferrari Carano Fume Blanc (fruity and rich), the 2007 Soave Classico Pieropan (tasty and dry), and the 2006 Grillo Cattarratto Ajello Majus Bianco from Sicilia (crisp and bold with a lovely bouquet).

Finally, it was time for dessert. We ordered espressos and enjoyed a sampler of the Dolci. Our favorite was the Semifreddo - a frozen hazelnut mousse topped with Raspberry sauce. This light dessert was presented beautifully and was quite tasty. We also loved the light and fresh-tasting Tiramisu Della Casa - ladyfingers, mascarpone, espresso, and cocoa powder.

The motto at Cucina Paradiso is "Quality is always a Priority" - and quality shows in both the service and cuisine - especially since all the breads, pasta and desserts are house made and vegetables and meats are locally sourced. We much appreciated the friendly, professional service from our waiter. Every menu item we tried was delicious and the meal was well paced and not rushed. Congratulations to owners Dennis and Melena Hernandez. We join them in wishing you "Buon Appetito," and we look forward to returning soon to Cucina Paradiso.



Executive Chef/Owner Dennis Hernandez

**POST NOTES:**

Cucina Paradiso  
 114 Petaluma Blvd. N.  
 707.782.1130  
 Lunch Mon-Sat 11:30-2:30  
 Dinner Mon-Thurs 5-9 PM  
 Fri-Sat 5-10 PM  
 Patio Dining  
 Reservations Recommended  
 Catering/Take-Out

Carol & Joe Davis

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Cucina Paradiso chefs



Carpaccio di Manzo



Franco Licata serves wine by the glass at our table



Dolci sampler