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— WHATS COOKING —



DOUGLAS RODRIGUEZ OPENS NEW RESTAURANT: OLA ON OCEAN IN SOUTH BEACH

After having opened Ola Steak in Coral Gables, and closed Ola Miami on Biscayne Boulevard, Chef Douglas Rodriguez has just opened Ola on Ocean where La Voile Rouge and then chef Michelle Bernstein's The Strand used to be at the Savoy Hotel. The elegant setting is South Beach chic with The Xocolat Bar, Ola's Dessert and Cigar Bar, and the flavors are Latin American sieved through the creativity of Chef Rodriguez. The menu is similar to that of Ola Steak with a listing of outstanding ceviches: from Soy-ginger marinated tuna with caramelized onion, ginger, jicama and Black beer sorbet (\$15) and Rainbow ceviches of Tuna, grouper, salmon, white soy sauce, citrus juices, sesame & cilantro (\$16) to Lobster paella ceviche with aji amarillo saffron sauce topped w/ saffron puffed rice (\$18). For appetizers there's Oysters Rodriguez (\$15), Mr. Rodriguez's personal take on Oyster Rockefeller; Foie gras and fig empanadas (\$18); and his signature entrees include Imperial rice (\$30); plantain-crusted mahi-mahi (\$27); pollo criollo (\$24); and crackling crispy pig (\$24), in addition to Ribeyed 2 ways (31); Tuna Causa (\$32) and vegetarian trio: an arepa-wrapped portobella mushroom, corn and seasonal mushrooms with huitlacoche sauce (\$24). There are tasting menus with or without wine ranging from \$68 for a four-course Tasting menu to \$150 for a six-course Tasting paired with wines. **Ola South Beach** is open for dinner Sunday-Thursday: 6p.m. to midnight, and till 2 a.m. on Friday and Saturday. 425 Ocean Drive, Miami Beach. 305 695-9125



VIDA! BISTRO & WINE BAR OPENS IN CORAL GABLES

A reversed Cinderella story: after his day job as a banker, Joe Castro turns into a chef at **Vida! Bistro & Wine Bar**. The 40-seat restaurant which just opened in Coral Gables is the dream-come-true of banker by day-chef by night **Joe Castro** and his wife and co-owner **Maria**. The atmosphere is romantic, with white curtains creating intimate spaces, couches and armchairs, subdued lighting, Botero paintings hanging on the walls and a cellist playing on Fridays. Vida! is a homage to home-cooking. While every meal includes an imported cheese tray, there is no menu: Castro who has cooked since he was a boy offers prix-fixe dinners -- three-course (\$40), five course (\$65) and seven-course (\$75) -- with weekly specialties such as Scottish salmon tartare with mâche, avocado purée and cilantro vinaigrette; Forest mushrooms and venison sausage tart; pan-seared five spice duck breast with butternut squash risotto; and espresso-marinated Wagyu beef with malanga gratin and red wine reduction. The extensive wine list put together by chef Castro (those that Castro the banker loves most) includes fair-priced international wines from boutique wineries and a good offering of wines by the glass (\$7 to \$12). **Vida! Bistro & Wine Bar** is open for dinner only Tuesday through Saturday, from 6:30 p.m. until closing. 1915 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Coral Gables, 305-443-8863. www.vidabistro.com



FRATELLI LA BUFALA ITALIAN PIZZERIA-TRATTORIA OPENS IN SOUTH BEACH

Fratelli La Bufala *pizzaioli emigranti* an Italy-based restaurant company with branches in London and Brazil has opened its first location in the United States in Miami Beach. Dominated by a wood-fired brick oven, the simply-decorated, airy 52-seat indoor-outdoor restaurant with blackboard drawings on the walls is a Neapolitan concept which includes thin-crust pizza (from \$6 to \$13.50) made with buffalo milk cheeses shipped from Italy twice a week -- mozzarella and smoked mozzarella, ricotta, and caciotta (a hard cheese similar to provolone); pastas (spaghetti, gnocchi, ravioli from \$10.50 to \$13.50); entrée salads (\$8.50 to \$10.50); and burgers and grilled meats from water buffalo --the only type of meat served at the restaurant -- sourced from grass-fed water buffaloes raised in Florida by the Lake Okeechobee Seminole Indian tribe. "It is an incredible combination of innovation and tradition spiced with Neapolitan friendliness. We believe that this concept which is successful in Italy and most recently in London demonstrates that you can innovate without losing your roots," said managers and co-owners **Adelchi Mancusi** and Luca D'Angelo who have hired in two *pizzaioli* from other established franchises in Italy. D'Angelo has worked with the FLB franchise for two years. Fratelli La Bufala is open for lunch and dinner 12 p.m. to 12 a.m. Monday through Saturday, and for dinner only on Sunday from 6:30 p.m. to 12 a.m. 437 Washington Avenue at the corner of Washington and Fifth Street, Miami Beach. (305) 532-0700 or (305) 532-0038

GINGER GROVE RESTAURANT OPENS IN MAYFAIR HOTEL COCONUT GROVE

Inside the Gaudi-like Mayfair Hotel, Ginger Grove recently opened under the management of Executive Chef **Christian Plotczyk** and General Manager **Susan Buckley**. Ginger Grove's exotic two levels, designed and developed by the **Puccini Group** in San Francisco open in the street level lounge (seating 36) with dramatic lighting shedding sultry accents on the high backed booths surrounding the marble and natural wood bar. Upstairs, in the 170 seat second floor restaurant, Asian lanterns play against rich silk paneled walls and Buddha heads from around the world surround oversized banquettes and tables. Executive **Chef Christian Plotczyk**, formerly Chef de Cuisine at Pacific Time and Executive Chef for China Grill Management has created a menu which is a shared culinary adventure across Asia. From small plates to large generous portions are served family-style. At lunch the prices range from \$9 to \$12 for Appetizers

and Salads; from \$12 to \$19 for entrées and sides are \$6. At dinner appetizers range from \$9 to \$12; entrees are from \$12 to \$21 and sides are \$6 to \$12. Desserts at \$8 at both lunch and dinner. A full bar features specialty cocktails (\$10 and \$12) such as the Humming Bird (Rum Botron from Guatemala, Moët & Chandon Brut Rosé, lime, lemon and brown sugar) or Gingerita (Herradura Silver Tequila with housemade cilantro syrup) and the wine list includes half-bottles of Champagne and wines range from \$23 to \$40 as well as wines by the glass (\$10 to \$18). The restaurant is open daily for breakfast from 6:30 a.m. until 11:30 a.m.; lunch from 11:30 p.m. until 3:30 p.m.; and dinner: Sunday through Wednesday from 5:00 p.m. until 11:00 p.m. and until 12:00 a.m. on Thursday, Friday and Saturday. **The Bar and Lounge** closes at midnight Sunday through Wednesday and at 2:00 a.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday. **Ginger Grove, Mayfair Hotel**, 3000 Florida Ave., Coconut Grove. For reservations and information please call (305) 779-5100 or visit the website at www.gingergroverestaurant.com



LOUIE'S BRICK OVEN GASTRO PUB & BISTRO OPENS IN NORTH MIAMI BEACH

Lou and Debbie DiBono (formerly of China Grill and Suva in Miami Beach) have teamed up once again to open **Louie's Brick Oven**. Designer **Sharron Lewis** brings an old-world feel to Louie's Brick with distressed Chicago brick, black woodwork paneling, wood floors, oversized banquettes and mahogany butcher-block tables. The coal & wood fire pizza oven in the kitchen reflects in three oversized mirrors over the 32-foot long bar with a slab of black granite and there is a Victorian system of fans and pulleys to the ceiling. The huge menu lists appetizers like Graham cracker-coated crispy calamari with marinara or chili sauce, and coconut coated crispy fried shrimp. Main courses from the wood & coal burning grill and rotisserie items include butterfly whole trout, Atlantic salmon filet, jumbo shrimp, burgers, a sixteen ounce rib-eye, skirt steak churrasco, BBQ baby back ribs, and whole rotisserie chicken with a choice of one side dish such as broccoli rabe, sliced tomato and blue cheese, mascarpone polenta, or herb roasted potatoes and choice of two sauces including homemade chimichurri, pesto aioli and citrus barbecue. The menu goes on with a vast array of salads, wood fired pizzas, sandwiches (lunch time), pastas, specialty entrees and home style desserts like Debbi's bread pudding, Key lime pie, chocolate peanut butter pie, and baked apple crisp. **Louie's Brick Oven Grill** is open daily for lunch from 11:30 am to 4:30 pm, and dinner from 5:00-11 pm, and offers a reduced late night menu 11:00 pm to 1:00 am on Friday and Saturday. Louie's Brick Oven Grill is located at 15979 Biscayne Blvd, North Miami Beach, in the new Avanti Center. 305.948.3330. www.louiebrickoven.com

VINO MIAMI, A WINE BAR/ RETAIL WINE BOUTIQUE RELOCATES IN SOUTH BEACH

Michael Brooks and Gigi Olah who had opened VINO on Rice Street in Coconut Grove in 2002 have just relocated into an exclusive and elegant wine bar/retail wine boutique with a minimalist decor which is, according to *Frommer's Guide* "as if it came straight out of a West Elm catalogue. This chic, Manhattan-esque wine bar is known for many things, especially the fact that it's a chill lounge in which the 30 and over set can hang out, have audible conversations, sip wine, and even enjoy cheeses, fondues, and delicious desserts. VINO also has a monthly wine tasting event with experts hailing from particular regions from around the world." In addition to a good selection of small production and boutique wines and champagnes by the glass and bottle, the food menu is wine-friendly: caviar, foie gras, smoked salmon and rolls, sandwiches, meats, imported cheeses and cheese and dessert fondues. **VINO Miami** is open Tuesday through Thursday 4:00pm-2:00am, Friday-Saturday 4:00 pm- 3:00am, Sunday 6:00pm-2:00am. Closed to the public on Monday but available for private events/parties. VINO Miami, 1601 Washington Place Suite 110. Miami Beach 305-532-VINO (8466)

To submit information and tips for this column, please e-mail to: editor@southfloridagourmet.com

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