

As Seen In

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ROSA'S ITALIAN RESTAURANT

Dining Out: Rosa's Italian Restaurant shines in Pismo

Rosa's, a fixture on Price Street, features a new dining room and bar but the same delicious Northern Italian entrees that have delighted beach-town diners for 20 years

By Dawn White

Every day, hundreds of motorists enter southbound Highway 101 in Pismo Beach without noticing the culinary jewel that is Rosa's Italian Restaurant.

Price Street pedestrians in a hurry might only see the restaurant's humble exterior and fail to look past the tall walls that surround the charming outdoor patio.

But for those in the know, Rosa's is one of the Central Coast's premier Northern Italian restaurants.

Owners Doug MacMillan and his wife, Shannon, have operated the eatery for 20 years. Before that, they and their families ran Italian restaurants in the San Joaquin Valley.

To commemorate their success in Pismo Beach, the MacMillans recently remodeled the restaurant. A chic bar was added, walls were moved to open up the dining room, and then they gave the entire interior a fresh look.

Faux-finished walls appear ancient and give the restaurant an ambience one could find in a charming seaside cafe in Italy.

Menu is tried and true

The menu at Rosa's has changed little over the years although chef Doug MacMillan regularly works on new dishes and desserts. House favorites include a chunky seafood cioppino, grilled swordfish with a tomato olive sauce, the housemade ravioli and the California pasta that pairs shitake mushrooms, artichokes and sundried tomatoes with a creamy pesto sauce.

On a recent warm day, friends and I dined on Rosa's outdoor back patio seated next to a charming concrete fountain.

The roasted garlic and goat cheese appetizer (\$8) is ideal for sharing as its served with about a dozen toasted crostinis, whipped goat cheese and an ample array of roasted garlic cloves. The pungent combination is hard to go wrong with—my group enjoyed it tremendously.

The sea scallops and shrimp appetizer (\$13) can work as either an entree or appetizer. Two large plump scallops and wrapped in prosciutto and seared until golden brown. The shrimp is blanketed in crispy pancetta and filled with a smoke mozzarella and then also seared. Both are delicious combinations of sweet seafood wrapped with crispy salty meats.

Salads and pasta dishes

Salads standouts include the arugula (\$7) and traditional Caesar (\$7). Arugula is tossed with crunchy pine nuts, goat cheese and tangy balsamic vinaigrette and then piled high atop a bed marinated portabello mushrooms.

The fettucini alfredo (\$13) is surprisingly light



The new bar at Rosa's Italian Restaurant, in Pismo Beach. The interior was recently remodeled. TRIBUNE PHOTOS BY DAVID MIDDLECAMP

for a cream sauce and is served with chicken or broccoli.

The serving of chicken was generous—and somewhat surprising—given that many restaurants instead offer larger servings of pasta.

The ravioli features a choice of meat or cheese filling and is topped with a classic marinara sauce. MacMillan's version of this simple dish is excellent, as is the case with many of the traditional Italian favorites.

Rosa's cocktails and wine list are well thought-out and include wines picked to pair with each dish. Most are California or Italian wines and come with a brief description to assist diners in picking the perfect wine for their meal.

Reach Dawn White at 781-7946.

ROSA'S ITALIAN RESTAURANT

491 Price St., Pismo Beach, 773-0551

Hours: 11:30 to 2 p. m. for lunch; 4:30 to 9 p. m. for dinner; Rosa's remains open until 10 p. m. on weekends

The scene: Revamped Tuscan restaurant serving specialties from Northern Italy

The cuisine: Italian dishes such as pastas, pizzas, salads, meat and seafood entrees

Expect to spend: \$8 to \$15 for lunch, \$10 to \$28 for dinner.

www.rosasrestaurant.com



Above, chef Doug MacMillan. Grilled swordfish over angel hair pasta with Adriatic sauce.



Pasta California is artichoke hearts, shitake mushrooms, sundried tomatoes in a light cream sauce over penne pasta.



Sea Scallops and Shrimp features seared sea scallops wrapped with prosciutto and filled with pine nut pesto as well as shrimp wrapped in pancetta filled with smoked mozzarella.

