



finedining

By Peter M. Gianotti
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Rialto

FOOD ★★★★★
588 Westbury Ave.
Carle Place
516-997-5283
rialtorestaurantli.com

COST \$\$-\$\$\$

SERVICE Very good

AMBIENCE Very good

ESSENTIALS Dinner, Tuesday to Thursday, 5 to 9 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 5 to 10 p.m.; Sunday, 4 to 9 p.m. Lunch, Tuesday to Friday, noon to 3 p.m. Weekend dinner reservations recommended. Major credit cards accepted.

In the pre-crudo era, when sushi meant bait and the wave of extra-virgin olive oil had yet to wash over Long Island, the continental restaurant defined upscale dining.

The rise of New American and pan-Asian establishments made them seem a bit old-fashioned. A lot of the “Le” and “La” spots departed in decades of changing tastes and econom-

ic upheaval.

For 27 years, Rialto has been one of the best. Under new ownership, the comfortable, relaxed spot still is.

Mario and Tara Fuentes took over Rialto last year. He formerly cooked at Cafe Testarossa in Syosset. They’ve more than tweaked the menu. The style, with polished dark wood, arches, soothing art and background music, has stayed the same. And so has the warm, openhanded approach.

So, nibble on the beet salad, completed with Gorgonzola cheese, slices of pear, arugula, romaine and a balsamic vinaigrette. A trace of the blue cheese works surprisingly well atop broiled oysters, too. Enjoy baked clams oreganata and a generously stuffed artichoke.

Fuentes prepares lush pan-sotti, pasta packets packed with minced vegetables, sauced alla vodka. He sends out fine orecchiette tossed with crumbled sausage, chickpeas, broccoli rabe, tomatoes, garlic and olive oil. Spaghetti



PHOTOS BY JOHNNY SIMON

Rialto in Westbury: New owners have retained the classic, comfortable style of the restaurant and updated the menu.

alla carbonara and gnocchi with pesto also deserve your attention.

The continental theme is played especially well with main courses. Dover sole meunière and seared striped bass are excellent. Even the overused branzino, which is becoming the heir to tilapia and Chilean sea bass, shines here.

Traditionalists will be buoyed by the duck à l’orange and the chicken cacciatore, the rack of lamb crusted with mustard-spiked bread crumbs and the grilled filet mignon with a hint of Gorgonzola and green-peppercorn sauce.

Their competition comes from a double-cut pork chop paired with braised fennel and cherry peppers; and the pan-

seared strip steak with mashed potatoes and caramelized onions.

If you need to turn the pages forward on your calendar, the menu offers tuna tartare, porcini-dusted sea scallops and farro salad.

But the dessert cart will make you feel nostalgic again. Zuccotto, the spongecake sweet, either the almond or hazelnut variety, smooth and lush; a wedge of professional flan; an ample slice of rich Italian cheesecake.

Originally, Fuentes planned to change the name of the restaurant to Acquabella. But he later thought otherwise. Some things don’t have to change. In 2012, the news on the Rialto is more than good. It’s excellent.



The Dover sole meunière is plated



Chef Mario Fuentes

AVERAGE MEAL PRICE PER PERSON \$ = \$15 \$\$ = \$30 \$\$\$ = \$60 \$\$\$\$ = \$100 ★★★★★ Exceptional ★★★★ Excellent ★★★ Very good ★ Good none Poor

weekendpicks | vegetarian choices

Vegetarians, unite. You can find tasty fare at lots of ethnic restaurants on Long Island and in some less likely places, too. What used to be a quest now requires a quick search. Here are three different options.

Tiger Lily Cafe in Port Jefferson attracts you with its spirited juice bar and lively personality. You’ll also enjoy the carrot-ginger soup, Greek salad, pear salad, falafel with yogurt-based sauce, house-made hummus,



PHOTO BY JOHN GRIFFIN

Tiger Lily Cafe in Port Jefferson

assorted cheese sandwiches and vegetarian wraps. Serious smoothies, too.
Tiger Lily Cafe, 156 E. Main St., Port Jefferson; 631-476-7080, tigerlilycafe.com

House of Dosas in Hicksville ranks very high among Long Island’s Indian restaurants, specializing in the savory vegetarian fare of southern India. Sample the dosas, or rice crepes, with lots of full-flavored fillings; lentil doughnuts; vegetable pakoras, or fritters; and vivid curries.
House of Dosas, 416 S. Broadway,

Hicksville; 516-938-7517, houseofdosas.com

NY Soup Exchange in Garden City appeals to vegetarians and nonvegetarians alike. There’s a vegetarian soup each day, with split-pea among the winners. Also, sample the vegetarian chili, the tasty salads, and smoothies. They do a sizable takeout business, just in case.
NY Soup Exchange, 945 Franklin Ave., Garden City; 516-742-7687, nysoupexchange.com — PETER M. GIANOTTI

Doing the continental

“Continental” restaurants traditionally take in the cuisines of Italy and France, sometimes Germany and Spain. Switzerland might make a cameo appearance. And you could find the United Kingdom and the United States represented, too. Here are restaurants where you’ll find the familiar alliances.

THE PALM COURT The main restaurant in The Carltun complex features dishes such as clams oreganata, dry-aged porterhouse steak, herb-crusted rack of lamb, duck with lingonberry sauce, and seared yellowfin tuna with carrot-ginger sauce. **Eisenhower Park, East Meadow**; 516-542-0700, ext. 1, thecarltun.com \$\$-\$\$\$

CAFE CAPRICCIO The Capriccio name is familiar to Long Island diners. In its latest incarnation, top dishes include mezze rigatoni Bolognese, duck with cherry sauce, steak au poivre, pork chop Milanese, the meringue bombé and chocolate velvet cake. **14 Haven Ave., Port Washington**; 516-938-0220, capricciorestaurant.net \$\$-\$\$\$

SAN MARCO San Marco understandably deems itself northern Italian, but this mainstay also is a spot for onion soup, Caesar salad, baked clams, shrimp cocktail, shrimp fra diavolo, grilled steaks, cheesecake.
658 Motor Pkwy., Hauppauge; 631-273-0088, sanmarcoristorante.com — PETER M. GIANOTTI