

# finedining

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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



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