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ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT

dining around



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Dreams alive and well at La Mesa's Antica Trattoria

Two childhood buddies who used to play soccer and scour the coastal waters of Sicily are now grown up, and instead of playing are working hard at their labor of love, a fabulous little Italian restaurant in La Mesa called Antica Trattoria.

Piero La Rosa and chef Francesco Basile came to the U.S. from the villages of Porticello and Santa Elia, near Palermo. At first they started working in several area restaurants including the acclaimed Panevino in the Gaslamp. That proved to be the spark that ignited their quest to open their own Gaslamp Tuscan style restaurant in the suburbs. That was a great idea and East County residents are loving it. The contemporary interior is romantic and trendy, a very pretty place to dine in a relaxed mode. Sip a bottle of wine and enjoy a satisfying Italian dinner that rates with the best of them. Among the appetizers you'll find starters such as Bruschetta Rustica (grilled bread topped with roasted eggplant, chopped tomato, basil and goat cheese) or the Mozzarella Capresa. Other good beginners are local Carlsbad mussels in a wine and pesto broth, or the Frittura Mista (a wonderful blend of shrimp, calamari and artichoke flash fried and served with a creamy garlic sauce).

Dinner selections cover all the bases, from seafood to pastas, veal to chicken. Pasta selections are tremendous with classics such as Lasagna di Vitello or the seafood rich Linguine Pescatore and hearty country Italian favorites such as gnocchi and risotto. If you love ravioli try the Ravioli Montecarlo (cheese ravioli with shrimp in Marsala wine and tomato cream sauce). Main course highlights are the Scampi Nettuno (delicately pan roasted shrimp with shiitake mushrooms and capers in a lemon wine sauce); Salmon Portofino (incredible creation of stuffed salmon with Dungeness crab and spinach in a buerre blanc sauce); Vitello ai Lamponi (thin slice veal scaloppine sautéed with raspberries in a brandy cream sauce); or the chicken favorite, Pollo Toscano (chicken breast topped with fresh asparagus, Italian prosciutto and fontina cheese). Find this spot for lunch or dinner at 5654 Lake Murray Blvd. at Baltimore. Call (619) 463-9919.