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# An Italian Rebirth in Lower Manhattan

Da Claudio Ristorante e Salumeria offers fresh Italian fare on Ann Street



Da Claudio Ristorante e Salumeria's cheese and salumi plate. PHOTO: DA CLAUDIO RISTORANTE

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Getting Da Claudio up and running after their former South Street Seaport restaurant was destroyed by superstorm Sandy has been a labor of love for Linda and Claudio Marini—their love of good cooking, hospitality and serving the lower Manhattan customers who kept them going when things appeared bleak.

“We had people waiting for us to open for two years,” Mrs. Marini recalls.

The married couple, who live nearby with their 11-year-old twins (a boy and a girl) and 8-year-old daughter, decided not to join their partners in opening another restaurant where Barbarini Alimentari stood on Front Street, but “never considered going anywhere else. We live down here and we wanted to be part of this revitalization,” Mrs. Marini says.



Da Claudio Ristorante e Salumeria's interior. PHOTO: DA CLAUDIO RISTORANTE

In November, they opened the 100-seat Da Claudio on higher ground west of the Seaport on the little known Ann Street. “People stumble across us,” she says. “Friends in the neighborhood come by with their families, and businesses are happy that they have a place to take their clients.”

Their former Italian chef, Mattia Meneghetti, rejoined them after working at an Austrian-German restaurant during their two-year hiatus. “He is excited to include some of his newly acquired recipes in the mix” of mostly northern Italian-influenced dishes, said Mr. Marini.

Classics such as Lasagnette Alla Bolognese (\$19), Fettuccine Pesto (\$17) and Spaghetti Carbonara (\$19) are on the menu, but Mr. Meneghetti's "specialty is putting his twist on it. I love his creativity," says Mr. Marini. For instance, the carbonara is made with Swiss chard and larger than usual, slightly crunchy chunks of pancetta, he explains.

All the pasta, sauces, stocks and desserts are made in-house and the seasonal menu often changes, with specials consistently offered. "Our customers come in to see what's new on the menu. They often ask me to order for them, which is a big compliment" Mr. Marini says.

His suggestion for lunch these days: "Burrata (\$16) that comes from Italy combined with peaches is a great way to start. Also homemade ravioli filled with spinach and ricotta cheese (\$20), with butter and sage sauce—simple, light fresh."



Fish of the day, pan-seared local black bass and fingerling potatoes. PHOTO: DA CLAUDIO RISTORANTE

For the main course Mr. Marini recommends: Spaghetti Moscardini (\$26), spaghetti with baby octopus, preserved

lemon, olive oil and tomato; risotto with duck confit and plum (\$22); or local fish in season, which now is Sea Bream (\$30), with a veal reduction sauce, fingerling potatoes and organic snap peas, garnished with cherries.

And for dessert: "Our version of Peach Melba (\$12). Peaches are poached in prosecco and then sliced very thin over homemade vanilla gelato, finished with a port wine sauce reduction—mild, very light. The homemade biscotti gives it some added texture and crunch," Mr. Marini says.

The airy room, with an open kitchen, is decorated for a "not too trendy, simple, timeless feel," explains Mrs. Marini. "A lot of thought went into this place. We tried really hard to listen to what the needs of the community were."

—Diane Goldie

**Da Claudio, 21 Ann St., between Broadway and Nassau streets; 212-285-2668; lunch served Monday through Friday from 11:30 a.m. until 3 p.m.; dinner served Monday through Friday from 4 p.m. until midnight, and Saturday and Sunday from 5 p.m. until midnight; DOH rating: A**