

delectable dining

“FARFALLA”

Translates to Fine Dining



Owner/Chef Michael Fattah

By Tani Hurley

Photography by
Donn Brown

Ristorante Farfalla is a sparkling gem in an unexpected setting. Tucked into the corner of the neighborhood center at the intersection of Corkscrew Road and U.S. 41, it is a place to enjoy dining out, with an appropriate emphasis on dining. Here a meal is an Occasion. The dining room has a contemporary flair; tables are set with white cloths and gleaming glassware. Soft music plays in the background.



As to be expected – since Farfalla is Italian for butterfly – there are numerous pieces of beautiful artwork that include butterfly representations from around the world.

Yet there remains an atmosphere of friendly informality. Guests are welcomed with a pleasant greeting, and frequent diners often step up to the open kitchen to chat with owner/chef Michael Fattah.

This year, Ristorante Farfalla celebrates its 10th birthday, and its longevity reflects the restaurant's high quality.

Farfalla's cuisine focuses on dishes prepared in the fashion of northern Italy, with delicate sauces and imaginative combinations. The menu is substantial,

with hot and cold antipasti, soups, salads, risottos, a plethora of pasta selections and exciting entrees that include chicken, veal, fish and beef. In addition, there is an offering of Signature Dishes that your server may describe in tempting detail.

Add to that a selection of some 140 wines and seven beers, and you will want to come back often, for one visit doesn't begin to provide a sampling of the variety offered.

Our most recent visit began with *frutti de mare sott'aceto*, a chilled seafood salad of calamari, clams, New Zealand mussels, and Ocean Garden Shrimp marinated in fresh herbs, virgin olive oil, lemon and garlic. The selection was light,

lemony and refreshing; the calamari crisp and chewy but not tough. The mussels, clams and shrimp, perfection.

The Bruschetta which followed was conspicuously fresh. The toasted bread was light and crisp, and the topping of diced tomatoes, garlic, olive oil and fresh basil colorful and tasty, with just the right amount of garlic – flavorful but not overpowering.

Ordinarily if we have appetizers, we might skip the soup course. Being from New England, my husband, Tom, loves good lobster bisque, and that was the special of the night, so it had to be included in our order. The soups at Farfalla are made from scratch, and the bisque is no



When You Go

Ristorante Farfalla is located in Corkscrew Village at the intersection of Corkscrew Road and U.S. 41 at 21301 Tamiami Trail South in Estero. The restaurant is open daily, except Thanksgiving, Christmas and Super Bowl Sunday. Lunch is served Monday – Friday, 11:30 to 2:30; dinner Monday – Sunday, 5 to 10 p.m. Reservations are suggested, 239-495-9912. For more information, visit www.ristorantefarfalla.com.

exception. The rich stock was lightly browned as only a proper homemade stock can be. There was no need to search for shreds of lobster in the bisque; large chunks of sweet Maine lobster danced happily in the broth. We shamelessly used chunks of the wonderful chewy Italian bread to mop up the last drops.

I selected the Filetto Di Dentice Al Cartoccio for my entrée, a fresh fillet of red snapper poached in parchment with garlic and spices and topped with slices of tomato. As the parchment is carefully unwrapped to release the steam, the aroma of garlic and spices tempts the appetite for the wonderful combination of flavors. The snapper is tender and moist; the seasonings just enough to enhance the fish.

My husband selected one of the Signature Dishes, Rack of Veal, a bone-in chop of milk-fed veal roasted and served with imported Italian porcini mushrooms in a demi-glace. The veal was fork-tender and so enhanced by the flavorful sauce that it invited my tasting as well.

All of the entrees except pasta are served with an accompaniment of the chef's special scalloped potatoes and fresh julienne vegetables, items that perfectly complement the entrees.

We can never pass up the homemade desserts, and ordinarily we would go for one of the specials, which vary regularly. This night, we opted for the Italian cheesecake, a regular item offered on the dessert menu, but one we hadn't yet tried. This isn't your New York blend of heavy sweet goo. It is a wonderful, light,

lemony cake that is just creamy enough to melt in your mouth and just rich enough to satisfy your sweet tooth. Of course, it wouldn't be a proper ending to the meal without a good cup of coffee, and Farfalla serves exactly that – excellent espresso, cappuccino and Illy coffee.

These are by no means the only delectable dishes on the menu. I confess there are very few dishes that we haven't tried. The consistency of quality and service make this restaurant a favorite when we want a quiet dinner together or when we entertain guests.

Egyptian by birth, Michael Fattah's university degree is in accounting, an unlikely field to accompany a career as a chef. But his skill in food preparation was honed from childhood as he assisted his mother with the preparation of meals for the family of nine – all of which were prepared only with homemade ingredients. His home city of Alexandria was a lively, international city in which ethnic cuisine of many nations thrived, and by his third year in college, he was employed in the restaurant of a German master chef.

Training in haute cuisine in Switzerland, years as a chef in fine restaurants in Bergen County, New Jersey, and more than a quarter of a century of experience have honed Fattah's skills and cemented his insistence on fresh ingredients and careful timing.

Every meal served is individually prepared to order, so be patient. It is worth the wait.