



Piccola Casa

Mediterranean Restaurant

Janet Fazio

With the recent downtown revitalization project, Livermore has become the new hot spot for dining out. From fondue, to Mongolian barbeque, Italian, Chinese and everything in between, there are dozens of fabulous choices for lunch and dinner in downtown Livermore. But there's also a new hidden gem that's tucked away on Bluebell Drive in Springtown, on the other side of 580, called Piccola Casa Mediterranean Restaurant. Family run, Piccola Casa opened five months ago in the spot formerly occupied by the Japanese restaurant, Yutaka. The service is warm and friendly, but not overbearing. And they do their best to accommodate; if you have a question about the menu, they may even send the chef out to answer it personally.

After perusing the menu while enjoying delicious, toasty warm bread, my friend and I decided to start dinner with two of Piccola Casa's dinner salads. I enjoyed an amazing Prosciutto Wrapped Asparagus Salad (\$6.00), with shaved Parmesan cheese, baby greens and truffle oil. Lots of asparagus wrapped in thin layers of prosciutto then roasted until crispy topped this salad. The Organic Mixed Green Salad (\$4.00) was also a good choice. It was loaded with walnuts, tomatoes, blue cheese and tossed in a balsamic vinaigrette dressing.

Piccola Casa's dinner menu includes many Italian and Greek entrees, including pastas and risotto, lamb and a large number of fish choices. For our dinner selections we savored one of their house specialties inspired by French cuisine - Pan Seared Day Boat Scallops (\$17.95). Sauteed in a sumptuous Meyer lemon beurre blanc reduction, these scallops were some of the best we have ever tasted. The beurre blanc (French for "white butter"), lemon juice and white wine with shallots reduced to a glaze give these scallops enormous



*Prosciutto Wrapped
Asparagus Salad*



*Aurora's Macadamia
Crusted Halibut*

flavor. The scallops were served on top of a bed of baby spinach, sweet corn and new potatoes.

We also enjoyed Aurora's Macadamia Crusted Halibut (\$18.50). The halibut was more than a simple entrée; it was like an entire meal stacked in one large bowl. The bottom layer was a salad comprised of romaine lettuce with large chunks of sweet mango and slices of avocado. The salad portion is tossed in tangy, raspberry vinaigrette. The next layer was the starch portion of the meal - slices of nicely seasoned roasted potatoes. At the top of the structure was a large portion of flakey halibut. The macadamia crust was lighter than what I had expected, but still offered the fish a yummy flavor.

Piccola Casa offers generous pours of a limited selection of local wines. Beer is also available. The lunch menu includes a large variety of sandwiches including roasted turkey, marinated roast beef, grilled chicken and many salads. Choose from grilled calamari, roasted turkey and a classic Caesar. There's even paella and a make-your-own calzone on the menu. Lunch prices range from \$5.95 to \$15.00.

Chocolate ganache is their house specialty dessert, which I wish we had tried. Instead we ordered the pecan pie, which seemed to be more of a pumpkin-pecan pie than the traditional pecan.

Enjoy dinner at Piccola Casa nightly from 5pm - 9pm. Lunch is offered Monday - Friday from 11:30am - 2pm. Find Piccola Casa at 945 Bluebell Drive, just off the First Street exit in Livermore. Reservations on weekends are recommended. Call 925.960.1028. For a menu listing, visit www.piccolacasarestaurant.com.