



DINING OUT NEW RESTAURANT REVIEWS

Angeluna Shines in Fort Worth's Sundance Square

Also: Marrakesh, Tarazza and What Else

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ANGELUNA

THE EXTERIOR OF ANGELUNA opens invitingly toward the building across the street from it in Fort Worth's Sundance Square-the rounded exterior of the under-con-struction Nancy Lee and Perry R. Bass Performance Hall. Even though the hall isn't finished, the symmetry is unmistakable. The restaurant's name, Italian for "angel moon," even refers to the limestone angels that will decorate Bass Hall. It's a can't-miss location-the restaurant's other nearest neighbors are a Barnes & Noble bookstore and an AMC movie theater. But Angeluna's owners, Joe Cosniac and Deryk Cave, aren't just hanging their hopes on the halo effect of a good location. Their beautiful, high-energy restaurant offers an exciting, well-done menu, with a mix of flavor influences from Thai to Cajun to Caribbean and Mediterranean. Every dish I saw on my visits was downright picturesque.

Cosniac and Cave have thought of everything, right down to

the little boutique by the front door, where you can purchase Angeluna caps and T-shirts.

And hey, you might *want* a souvenir. After all, Angeluna with its dress-to-impress cuisine has come into Fort Worth with a reputation. The same owners have a renowned sister restaurant in Aspen called Mezzaluna. One thing the restaurant shares with its Aspen sister is the layout-small marble tables close together on a stone tile floor.

The angel-moon theme shows up in a stunning clouds-and-sky ceiling mural with angels subtly woven into the clouds; on the walls are framed works by local artists on the same theme. Floor to ceiling windows frame Bass Hall.

From our experience, it would be hard to go wrong with much on this menu.

Meals start with bread-our waiter told us of the baker who comes to the restaurant in the middle of the night and bakes “whatever bread he wants,” his efforts distributed to diners in little wire cow baskets that you can buy in the boutique. It’s excellent bread, but on two visits we never saw any butter.

An appetizer of shrimp paesano with limoncello butter turned out to be four fat, delectable breaded shrimp perched like lemon slices on a martini glass filled with lemon-butter sauce. A salad of baby greens with sweet basil vinaigrette was so simple but so fresh. Individual pizzas came from the wood oven with crunchy thin crusts, dotted with ingredients like wood-grilled mushrooms, roast garlic and Texas chèvre. A pecan-crusting salmon flaked tenderly, nestled next to cayenne-spiked yams.

The only less-than-angelic dish was an appetizer of oven-roasted chicken that- for reasons unknown-was served in a

thick, tasteless strudel crust. And desserts ranged from heavenly to far too dense. We could hardly get a fork into the sweet potato cake or the flourless chocolate cake. But toasted coconut ice cream floated on the tongue (though it almost overwhelmed a Key lime tart in a macadamia crust).

On a weekday lunch visit, Angeluna was hopping with suits and buzzing with energy. But on a Sunday night visit, the restaurant was half-full and almost cozy, with twinkling lights shining like stars from the blue cloud ceiling. I noticed the kid-friendly pizzas and warm cookies and milk on the menu; you could bring the family here easily. Be careful, though; the kids will want you to buy that cow basket for sure.

-Renee Hopkins

Angeluna. 215 E. 4th St., Fort Worth; 817-334-0080; 11 a.m.-10 p.m., Monday-Friday; 5 p.m.-midnight, Saturday & Sunday. Moderate.

MARRAKESH

SAY “MOROCCO” AND WHAT COMES TO mind? For most of us, vague impressions of mysterious scents, foreign intrigue and the rhythmic “ching” of belly dancers’ tiny finger cymbals. Say “Moroccan cuisine” and you’ll draw an almost complete blank-in Dallas, only one or two chefs have ever offered the exotic fare, and those only by special arrangement.

So now comes Marrakesh, this city’s first authentic all-Moroccan restaurant, bent on remedying the regrettable omission. Its owners couldn’t have picked a more apt location-almost embarrassingly over-rich in decor for the short-lived French restaurant it was designed to house.

The fragrant opulence of the food is, indeed, intriguingly

foreign-but in the friendliest possible way. The near-sweet, house-baked bread brought with tart ripe olives lor openers gently introduces the palate to surprising contrasts to come. As in Greek and Middle Eastern cooking, Moroccan dishes combine spices we think of as suitable for sweets with cilantro, papri-ka, sometimes even piquant seasonings in dishes that strike (he tongue first as unfamiliar, then seduce it with comfort-food associations.

One stellar example: A starter called *pastilla*-ground chicken and almonds wrapped in puff pastry and dusted with | powdered sugar-awakens appetites with its delicate textures and tastes. Follow it with *tagine royale*, meaty lamb simmered with onions and hauntingly sweet prunes to melt-away succulence in a hearty main dish that could well be the Moroccan translation of Mom's Sunday pot roast.

Other standouts deserve equal honors, particularly *shekshouka*, a traditional salad of roasted bell peppers and tomato in cumin-touched garlic vinaigrette-the room-temp appetizer delivers gentle bliss, as do plump mussels steamed in a sweet-against-tart tomato lemon sauce. Lamb chops come with savory rice and vegetables, sided with a *harissa* tomato sauce that's only subtly different from the *sher-moula* sauce that complements another entrée's perfectly grilled cut of fresh salmon.

Along with its food. Marrakesh's amiable service and hospitably relaxed ambience give the place a family appeal unexpected in a place that features belly dancers on weekends. Until, that is, we witnessed the evening's lithe, gauze-clad star leading a birthday party group of 12-year-olds and younger in an impromptu demonstration of her art that had the whole place applauding. -Betty Cook

Marrakesh. 5207 Lovers Ln.; 214-357-4104; 5:30-11 p.m.,

*Sunday-Thursday; S:30-midnight, Friday & Saturday.
Moderate.*

TARAZZA

ONE GLANCE AT TAEAZZA'S MENU TRANSpported me back to Los Angeles, home of some of the most inventive and playful chefs in the world. A Japanese version of Italian risotto, a French duck confit salad, a Thai soup, a feta-laced Greek salad—this menu borrows ideas from all over the globe, acids its own spin (like Pacific Rim pesto) and leaves taste buds dancing in its wake.

Hatched by the creative duo at sister restaurant Zizilki's, Costa Arabatzis and Mary Cloutier, and Teiichi Sakurai, owner of Teppo Yakitori and Sushi Bar. this restaurant had great promise right from the start. And it delivers.

As is so often the case, the appetizers rank as the strongest part of the menu, while the desserts are its weakest. Crab cakes are learned with a sprightly coriander mayonnaise. Smoked salmon rolled around cream cheese laced with dill, capers and red onions needs just a bagel to make a complete meal. And. although the menu offers plenty of options like a tender roast duckling-skip the Asian BBQ sauce that tastes more like canned gravy-and a great sautéed pork tenderloin enlivened with ginger, scallions and coconut, it's the seafood that really shines here.

As good as the sautéed Norwegian salmon is, the cashew-crusted snapper gets my vote for best entrée, although I'd be hard-pressed to decide between its accompanying wild mushroom risotto and Tarazza's killer herbed mashed potatoes.

The sole dessert we tried, a very odd pancake-type affair topped with coconut ginger ice cream, scared us away from the dessert list on other visits, but the dark, inviting bar area might be a better end to your meal. Here, the baby grand is played with restraint, as easy on the ears as the restaurant is on the eyes. Tarazza has a warm, private-club feeling to it. and its balcony looks to be a perfect spot to linger with a glass of wine on summer evenings.

And it's likely to be a very special wine, because Cloutier, honored twice by *Wine Spectator* magazine, knows her way around a wine cellar. -*Suzanne Hough***Tarazza.** 4514 Travis St.; 214-521-217\$; 5 p.m.-midnight, Monday-Saturday.Moderate.

WHAT ELSE

SO MUCH FOR WATEL'S SLY WIT IN GIVING its Lowest Greenville spinoff'a sound-alike name. Such offhand drollery might or might not be Gallic, but the place itself certainly is. Centering a strip of the neighborhood's colorfully assorted shops. What Else suggests a smart Parisian brasserie in setting and decor. Less Parisian is the staffs disarming cordiality, exemplified by partner-manager Thierry Plumettaz's indulgent good humor and chef Seth de Wit's sunny dishes more suggestive of southern France.

And underscored by an unusually diner-friendly menu format. Dinner's bill of fare lists appetizers, soups and salads, and desserts on one page, entrées on another- with three choices from the first list for one fight fixed-price meal or a main and one, two or three smaller courses for more money (but not a lot). The prime full-course feast on our visit started with chive-sauced sweetbreads, tender in a paper-crisp batter shell;

moved on to a napoleon of rich lobster meat in mushroom sauce between puff pastry sheets; and ended with a flawless country *tarte latin*, chunky apples in a cinnamon syrup on a tender crus!.

Perfectly sautéed frog legs Provencales were another fine starter, as was a grilled portobello mushroom capped with moz-zarella, underseasoned if it hadn't worn a dollop of tapenade that combined minced ripe olive, garlic and anchovies to magical effect. Duck breast slices with honey, lemon and lavender made a pretty spread on the plate.

A solo lunch visit's roasted bell pepper salad held bouquets of flavor, and duck leg confit was fall-apart tender, although its risotto bed was overwhelmed by a rata-touille-esque abundance of chopped tomato and other vegetables.

The wine list here is reasonable, too, and gratifyingly varied for the price-bottles for \$22. \$4.50 per glass, with some reserve (read; pricier) selections also available.

-B.C. What Else. 1915 Greenville Ave.; 214-874-WHAT; Lunch; 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m., Tuesday-Saturday; dinner: 6-10 p.m., Tuesday-Thursday & Sunday: 6-10:30 p.m., Friday & Saturday. Inexpensive to moderate.

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