

## That's Amore!

Thursday, October 4, 2007

### Beyond chic, beyond perfection

By Dale McKinney

Amorè Ristorante Italiano

5 to 10 p.m. daily

4 to 6 p.m. weekdays, Happy Hour

47-474 Washington St.

La Quinta

Reservations suggested

(760) 777-1315

What a difference a year makes. In a little more than 12 months, owner Rick J. Lattanzio has refined his vision of fine dining at Amorè in La Quinta into a world class dining spot.

No doubt he's benefited from such brilliant people like the sparkling and uber-professional America Cordell (Banquet Manager) and Ernest Gonzales (Manager). Certainly, the cuisine at Amore has sailed up several notches under the elegant hand of Luis Zamera. If you loved Amorè last season, hang onto your napkin - Amorè will charm your charge card right out of your wallet.

Walk into Amorè through its massive, frosted glass door, step onto a lighted glass floor and the Robert Goulet voice of local cabaret star Jere Ring coaxes you into the chic bar seating with his intoxicating blend of cabaret classics and outrageous wit - and I mean "outrageous." From here, the dining area opens up like an ocean liner, high ceilings, angled windows, lighted support stanchions and huge ficus trees all hover over crisp white linens and upholstered chairs.

From the appetizers, salads and soups, to the pasta, seafood and beef, Amore's puts a true Italian flair into everything they prepare. The Shrimp Scampi (\$15), highly popular and equally highly recommended, is a light blend plump shrimp with garlic and butter offered up in a stunning presentation.

The pasta selections (about 15 specialties) will astound with their variety and generous portions. From the simple garlic and olive oil (Aglio e Olio - \$20) to the Tuscan Rigatoni (\$24) with sausage, white beans and basil in a light chicken broth (\$24), I dare you to say you've tasted these anywhere else. I saw a few Lobster Risotto (\$30) sail past me to eager tables that cheered "Our favorite! The best!"

Now I'm not usually the reviewer to go to about fish. If I don't see an ocean, I don't usually order. However, my date ordered a Cioppino (\$38) that rivals anything on the docks of Fisherman's Wharf in San Francisco. This Neopolitan stew of clams, mussels, stone crab slaws, fish, shrimp, scallops are all cooked in a pomodoro white wine broth and topped with a Maine Lobster tail and finished with fried leeks. Out of this world.

Among the veal dishes, the Veal Parmesan (\$42) - a double cut veal chop, pounded, breaded and topped with a perfect marinara, and coated with mozzarella and parmesan cheese - has deservedly won the hearts of Amore regulars. I highly recommend the Bone-in Rib Eye - seared in the wood burning oven with roasted garlic cloves and a beef au jus (\$40). The supreme tenderness, juiciness and simplicity of the seasoning proves Chef Luis' mastery with beef - you will be in carnivore heaven after the first bite.

If you're here for the season, or just for a weekend, staying in Palm Springs or Coachella, you owe it to yourself to step into Amorè - this will be a love that lasts.

