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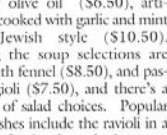
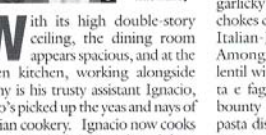
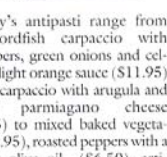
The Great Life

George Christy

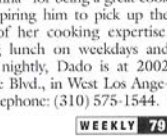
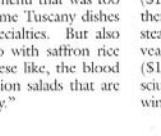
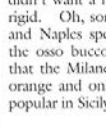
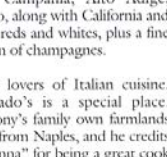
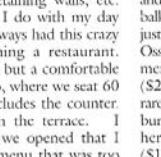
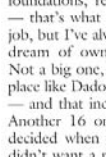
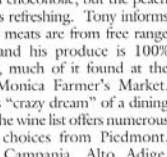
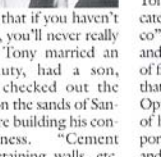
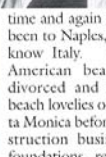
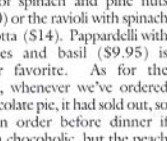
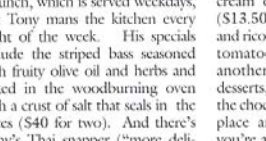
Trey Parker and Matt Stone are among the regulars who have discovered Tony Miano's cooking at the 9-month-old Dado — "meaning 'dice,'" says Tony, "I figured naming it dice might bring me luck." Nicolas Cage and Jim Carrey have stopped by, as have Bridget Fonda, the Scotti brothers, Kathryn Bigelow, real estate prince Mark Stranahan, Sotheby's Enzo Ricciardelli. Situated on the ground floor of a new building on Sawtelle Boulevard in West Los Angeles amid that cluster of Japanese eateries and shops, Dado brings a welcome air of change to the neighborhood, although, as life would have it, grumbles ensued among the locals that an invader entered their turf. A territorial imperative attitude, obviously, and while sushi and sashimi and shabu-shabu are fine, it's a pleasure to encounter another excellent Italian restaurant, the kind that the dining guides in Europe would tell you is worth going back for. Roman-born Tony Miano also grew up in Naples, about which we've heard



(1) Ben Stiller with fiancée Christine Taylor during gala dinner at Hollywood Palladium benefitting Project A.L.S., which raises awareness and funds for "Lou Gehrig's disease" research. Ben co-hosted with Kristen Johnston; (2) Mark Canton with gala chairman Brad Grey; (3) Yasmine Bleeth; (4) New Line's Michael De Luca and Maverick Records' Guy Oseary; (5) Greg Kinnear, Hank Azaria and Helen Hunt; (6) Andie McDowell



(11) CAA's Richard Lovett, Kevin Huvane, David O'Connor and Bryan Laird received David Nissen Award; (12) Project A.L.S. founder Jenifer Estess with Scott Wolf; (13) Sheryl Crow entertained; (14) Paula Abdul; (15) Jane Krakowski and Courtney Thorne-Smith



time and again that if you haven't been to Naples, you'll never really know Italy. Tony married an American beauty, had a son, divorced and checked out the beach lovelies on the sands of Santa Monica before building his construction business. "Cement foundations, retaining walls, etc. — that's what I do with my day job, but I've always had this crazy dream of owning a restaurant. Not a big one, but a comfortable place like Dado, where we seat 60 — and that includes the counter. Another 16 on the terrace. I decided when we opened that I didn't want a menu that was too rigid. Oh, some Tuscany dishes and Naples specialties. But also the osso bucco with saffron rice that the Milanese like, the blood orange and onion salads that are popular in Sicily."

With its high double-story ceiling, the dining room appears spacious, and at the open kitchen, working alongside Tony is his trusty assistant Ignacio, who's picked up the yeas and nays of Italian cookery. Ignacio now cooks at lunch, which is served weekdays, but Tony mans the kitchen every night of the week. His specials include the striped bass seasoned with fruity olive oil and herbs and baked in the woodburning oven with a crust of salt that seals in the juices (\$40 for two). And there's Tony's Thai snapper ("more delicate than the snapper from Mexico") which he bakes with olive oil and herbs — all it needs is a drizzle of fresh lemon juice. This is a dish that Dr. Andrew Weil ("Eating for Optimum Health") would approve of heartily (\$40 for two, and since portions for both the striped bass and the snapper are generous, don't balk at taking what's left for they're just as delicious the following day). Osso bucco is served with the aforementioned saffron rice Milanese (\$24.95), and Tony also touts his rare strip loin seared in the woodburning oven and served with a herb-infused tomato sauce (\$17.50). For hungry carnivores, there's the 24-ounce porterhouse steak from the same oven (\$28), veal filet in a sweet-sour sauce (\$14.50), and veal filet with prosciutto sautéed in olive oil, white wine and sage (\$14.50).

Tony's antipasti range from swordfish carpaccio with capers, green onions and celery in a light orange sauce (\$11.95) to beef carpaccio with arugula and shaved parmigiano cheese (\$12.75) to mixed baked vegetables (\$9.95), roasted peppers with a garlicky olive oil (\$6.50), artichokes cooked with garlic and mint Italian-Jewish style (\$10.50). Among the soup selections are lentil with fennel (\$8.50), and pasta e fagioli (\$7.50), and there's a bounty of salad choices. Popular pasta dishes include the ravioli in a cream of spinach and pine nuts (\$13.50) or the ravioli with spinach and ricotta (\$14). Pappardelli with tomatoes and basil (\$9.95) is another favorite. As for the desserts, whenever we've ordered the chocolate pie, it had sold out, so place an order before dinner if you're a chocoholic, but the peach sorbet is refreshing. Tony informs that his meats are from free range stock, and his produce is 100% organic, much of it found at the Santa Monica Farmer's Market. For this "crazy dream" of a dining room, the wine list offers numerous Italian choices from Piedmont, Friuli, Campania, Alto Adige, Toscano, along with California and French reds and whites, plus a fine selection of champagnes.

For lovers of Italian cuisine, Dado's is a special place. Tony's family own farmlands not far from Naples, and he credits his "nonna" for being a great cook and inspiring him to pick up the tricks of her cooking expertise. Serving lunch on weekdays and dinner nightly, Dado is at 2002 Sawtelle Blvd., in West Los Angeles. Telephone: (310) 575-1544.