



Owner/Chef Michael Fattah is justifiably proud of both his restaurant's beauty and its fabulous cuisine.

# Ristorante Farfalla

Classic northern Italian cuisine is perfectly reinterpreted at Ristorante Farfalla.

A shopping mall in Estero may seem an incongruous location for so beautiful a restaurant as Ristorante Farfalla. From the moment you open the door and are assailed by the tempting aromas of sautéed garlic and fresh basil, you expect to be surrounded by marble columns, cherubic statues and flowing fountains. No matter. The food will soon make you forget your surroundings, though Farfalla has done much with its location. Ironed linens, soft lighting and heavy silver grace the table. The staff, including Pam Knapp, who has been there since Farfalla's opened, is professional, courteous, and yet very friendly. Busboy Moses Seda-Morales, another veteran, will be so quick to your elbow brandishing the fresh pepper mill, you'll think he owned stock. Between them both, you will want for nothing during your stay.

You will also be greeted by hostess, Catherine Fazzina, who will see to your comfort immediately...rearranging window blinds, tucking a napkin, preparing you to relax and enjoy what truly has to be some of Southwest Florida's greatest food.

Chef and owner Michael Fattah hails from Alexandria, Egypt. He received his training in haute cuisine in Switzerland and those lessons were not wasted. Fattah has been a chef for

By Mitchell Klein

Photography by Donn Brown

a quarter of a century, many of those years spent in Bergen County, New Jersey in some of the Northeast's greatest kitchens. Fattah wanted to try his hand at running his own establishment however, and he got the chance in 1998 when he moved to Florida and opened Ristorante Farfalla. Here he gets to showplace his phenomenal talent.

Everything at Farfalla's is cooked to order and fresh (patience please, and remember dining out is an occasion.) Enjoy the chewy bread, dipped in virgin olive oil, while you peruse a menu so delightfully extensive, you may be stumped at having to order only one meal.

Begin with Vongole Origanate, tiny clams caressed by butter, bread crumbs and oregano, or a heart of palm salad with asparagus and homemade roasted peppers. Move on to the soup and salad course, assured that the soups are homemade and the salads will crackle with fresh-from-the-garden goodness. Next, in true Italian fashion, is the



risotto or pasta course and it presents most Americans with a quandary: Do we skip this course and settle on our entree or risk being unable to finish and opt to try everything? Keep in mind the take-out box you may ask for at the end of the meal and go for this middle course. Fattah's porcini mushroom risotto or Con Tartufo Bains E Nero (with black and white truffles), actually stops conversation as you roll such delicacies around your tongue. Farfalla's menu also includes two categories of pasta—soft and homemade like gnocci (pasta balls filled with potato) and a ravioli of the day, or one covered with such sauce as fresh leeks, Norwegian salmon, champagne cream and caviar (Pasta Farfalle). If you are certain by now that a meal can get no better, think again. From Pesce (fish) like Filetto Di Dentice Al Cartoccio (filet of red snapper wrapped in paper and baked), Polo (chicken) such as All'Ortolano (tender breast with artichoke hearts, mushroom and onions), Veal like the Scaloppine Alla Micheangelo (with homemade mozzarella and white wine) to the fork-tender New York strip steak, Bistecca Al Pepe Verde (with peppercorn and brandy), your tastebuds will be exploding with joy with each new forkful.

Your meal may be accompanied by a selection from Farfalla's extensive wine list (with each selection helpfully followed by a complete description) as the restaurant has only a

Though unimposing outside, Ristorante Farfalla makes up for its lack of curb appeal by serving show-stopping food.

beer and wine license, but with such a selection (even a menu of dessert wines), you won't notice the lack. Speaking of desserts, top off your fabulous feast with homemade Tiramisu or Italian Cheese Cake (remembering dessert really does go to a different stomach) and end the meal with an express or cappuccino. Try to summon the strength to yell "Bravo" for that is what the gastronomic experience deserves.

## RISTORANTE FARFALLA

Ristorante Farfalla, located in Corkscrew Village, caddy-corner from Koreshan Park, at 21301 Tamiami Trail South in Estero, is open 7 days a week from 5-10 pm weekdays and until 10:30 pm Friday and Saturday. Handicapped accessible. All major credit cards accepted. Reservations strongly encouraged. For reservations, call (239) 495-9306.

