

NOVEMBER 2001

FOOD ARTS

AT THE RESTAURANT AND HOTEL FOREFRONT



ASIA'S ARRESTING DEVELOPMENT
PLUS OUR FRESH CACHE OF GLOBAL ENTICEMENTS

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS BY JULIET GLASS

Dan Pintabona, former top toque at **Tribeca Grill** and currently chef/partner at **Trina** (St. Lauderdale, FL), returned to Manhattan to open **Dani**, a rustic Mediterranean spot at 100 Hudson Street in October. The 80-seat storefront restaurant gets its handsome looks from large stone columns, iron details, and sweeping cafe windows, while colorful 90-year-old Sicilian tiles enliven the space. The menu is inspired by the flavors of Sicily, with forays to North Africa and beyond. **APPS** (\$7 to \$12): almond soup with Marcona almonds, and concord grapes, and almond tuile; chickpea fried calamari with cracked pepper and lemon aioli. **MAINS** (\$16 to \$23): roasted sea scallop and braised beef short rib kebabs with fava bean ragout; tagine-baked sea bass with pine nut couscous, *chermoula* (a North African flavoring blend), and clams; **DESSERTS** (\$5 to \$8): almond milk *panna cotta* with blood orange gelée; warm chocolate cake with Sicilian pistachio ice cream and Marsala cherries.

Atlanta In September **Kevin Rathbun** launched the cold small plates venue **Krog Bar** at 112 Krog Street, in the same Stove Works complex as his smash hit **Rathbun's**. Partners are wife **Melissa Rathbun**, general manager **Cliff Bramble**, and pastry chef **Kirk Parks**. The diminutive spot seats 35 indoors at communal tables and bar, while a patio accommodates an additional 20. Aged cypress wood offset by browns and maroons and hand-crafted metal wine shelves displaying a lusty collection of Spanish and Italian vintages set a warm and inviting mood. Rathbun's menu is decidedly Mediterranean, with antipasti, crudo, cured meats, *panzerotti* (Italian cafe sandwiches), and cheeses. **ANTIPASTI** (\$3 to \$6): grilled artichoke/onion *crudo*; bonito tuna with roasted peppers and *glu* vinegar. **TRAMEZZINI** (\$5 to \$7): prosciutto-roasted peppers; basil pesto with Tetilla cheese. **DESSERTS** (averaging \$3): biscotti; gelati.

Las Vegas September saw the opening of two dining spots in the **MGM Grand** by famed French chef **Joël Robuchon**: the first U.S. spinoff of his Parisian small plates concept **L'Atelier de Joël Robuchon** and **Joël Robuchon at The Mansion**, a more formal affair serving a gastronomic menu. Paris-based Pierre-Yves Rochon, who designed L'Atelier in Paris and Tokyo, is behind the look of both venues. At the red-and-black-hued L'Atelier most of the 39 seats cluster around its signature counter and face the kitchen, where all cooking is in full view of the guests (a few full-service tables are available). The 66-seat Joël Robuchon at The Mansion emulates a luxurious private townhouse, complete with elegant gardens and lounge, to make guests feel they've been invited to dine *chez-the-chef*. Two prix-fixe menus are offered: nine courses for \$165, and 16 for \$295. Several veterans of other Robuchon venues are helming the kitchens: **Steve Benjamin** is chef de cuisine at L'Atelier, **Claude Le Tohic** is top toque at Joël Robuchon at The Mansion; **Kamel Guechida** is executive pastry chef at both. **L'Atelier APPS** (\$14 to \$54): langoustine carpaccio with roasted poppy seed dressing; prawns coated in vermicelli with orange/jasmine clip. **MAINS** (\$26 to \$54): fresh cod fillet in vegetable/basil broth; roasted rack of lamb with fresh thyme. **DESSERTS** (\$10): chartreuse soufflé with pistachio ice cream; fresh peaches with lemon marmalade and white chocolate cream.

San Francisco **Sam Josi**, a former sous chef at **The Slanted Door**, teamed up with **Vintage 415** (a promotions company owned by **Nate Valentine**, **Todd Palmerton**, **Demetrius Chapin-Rienzo**, and **Lawrence Vavra**) to open **Mamacita** last month at 2317 Chestnut Street. Locally based architect **Tim Murphy (Frisson)** gutted the space, which was **Café Marimba** in a past life, and combined a thatched ceiling with roughed-up dark wood furniture and oxidized metal accents to create an easy-going cantina-by-the-sea ambience. Josi's family-style menu is regional Mexican filtered through the California lens of fresh local ingredients. **APPS** (\$6 to \$12): oven-roasted Dungeness cracked crab with adobo/garlic butter, cilantro oil, and warm corn fritters; crispy roasted chicken with cumin, guajillo chile oil, and pepper/lime dipping sauce. **MAINS** (\$12 to \$23): bone-in chicken breast with green mole, grilled radicchio, *queso fresco*, and masa polenta; corn-meal/beer-battered red snapper fillet tacos with guajillo chile rouille, red cabbage, and grapefruit/mango *salsa cruda*. ■

