Piccolina Toscana

1412 N. DuPont Street Wilmington, Delaware 19806 302.654.8001 :: www.piccolinatoscana.com Facebook: piccolinatoscana :: Twitter: piccolina_wilm



Chef/Owner Dan Butler

estled in Trolley Square–Wilmington, Delaware's northwesterly shopping, nightlife and dining enclave–is an L-shaped plaza that houses fine wine, gourmet coffee and boutique fashion, and has for 20 years been home to locals' favorite Italian eatery. Having already successfully converted Griglia Toscana (established in 1991) to Tavola Toscana, and again into Toscana Kitchen+Bar, Owner and Chef Dan Butler has reinvented his Italian kitchen again, this time as the smallplate and dessert focused *Piccolina Toscana*. Says Butler, *"Times change and sometimes you change with them and sometimes you help them change."*

Toscana's customers—many of whom are loyal, twenty-year regulars—have come to expect high quality, seasonal ingredients, presented through authentically Italian preparations. Although Piccolina Toscana will continue to offer these elements, the restaurant has undergone major changes: a new name, an updated menu and an extensive remodel. Offering artisanal cheeses, house-made and imported salumi, pizzas, hand-rolled pastas, and authentic Italian dishes, the new menu—as well as the décor and attitude—suit the way people want to eat today. Perhaps the *pièce de résistance*, Piccolina Toscana's focal point is its new open-display dessert kitchen, where a pastry-chef prepares desserts and serves house-made gelati.

Trolley Square is the trendy area of Wilmington that attracts young professionals to live, shop, dine and play; those outside the city see Trolley Square as a place to see and be seen. Piccolina Toscana offers diners a new way to do just that. The restaurant's loft-style design and open floor plan ensure a convivial atmosphere: all tables have visual access to the full dining room, the elevated pastry station and the kitchen; rounded booths line the dining room perimeter, and a high-top community table is perched in front of the pastry kitchen. No matter the size of one's group or where one is seated, it feels like a party. A recessible, backlit, sheer black curtain defines the private dining area, which can be arranged for intimate or large private parties.

Notwithstanding the young, hip feel that was needed to make the restaurant feel authentically updated, Butler renovated Piccolina Toscana with the intention of it becoming a draw for families. Thanks to a new

Sunday brunch offering, and a Sunday family dinner buffet, Piccolina Toscana diners can meet their business associates for lunch all week long, and enjoy family meals with loved ones on Sundays. One feature left untouched: the \$5 happy hour that runs Monday through Friday from 4-7pm.

Butler says, "A high premium is placed on hospitality." The restaurant's new late-night hours (the dining room and the full menu will be available until 12 Midnight, Thursday through Saturday) will add to the new Toscana experience. He adds, "We hope people will stop in after parties, after work or even after they've had dinner in other restaurants but want to cap off their night with a special dessert and cocktail."



FACT SHEET



Location:	1412 N. DuPont Street, Wilmington, Delaware 19806
Phone:	302.654.8001
Website:	www.piccolinatoscana.com
Social media:	www.facebook.com/piccolinatoscana www.twitter.com/piccolina_wilm
Press Contact:	Chef/Owner Dan Butler, danbutler@bigchefguy.com
Restaurant Contact:	General Manager John Narvaez, john@bigchefguy.com
Hours:	
	MonWeds.:11:30am-2pm and 5pm-10pmThursFri:11:30am-2pm and 5pm-12amSat:5pm-12amSun:10am-2pm and 4pm-8pm
Lounge hours:	Happy Hour, weekdays, 4:00 pm - 7:00 pm Lounge closes at 1:00 am
Payment Options:	All major credit cards accepted
Reservations:	http://www.piccolinatoscana.com/reservations.asp
Attire:	Casual
Parking:	On-site parking lot, additional unmetered street parking
Private Dining:	Private dining area can be curtained off from main dining area, in two configurations that seat up to 30 and 60 guests. Menu options include shared starters with artisanal cheeses and imported salumi. Patio can also be reserved for private parties.
Ongoing Promotions:	 Sunday brunch: buffet and cooked-to-order items, 10am-2pm; \$20 (\$5 for kids <10) Sunday family dinner: buffet and a la carte menu, 4-8pm; \$20 (\$10 for kids <10) \$5 happy hour menu, 4-7pm weekdays Dining room open until Midnight, Thursday through Saturday, full menu available
Travel Profile:	Wilmington, Delaware, is located midway between New York City and Washington, DC, and just 30 minutes south of Center City Philadelphia. A growing city which boasts a high concentration of scientists, bankers and technologists, Wilmington has a cosmopolitan feel, yet retains the charm of a city built by one of America's "royal" industrialist families.
History:	Established in October 2010, Piccolina Toscana is the reinvention of the upscale Italian restaurant opened in 1991 as Griglia Toscana, later renamed Tavola Toscana and then Toscana Kitchen+Bar, each name change accompanied by a new menu and format.

PROFILE	piccolina
Food:	Piccolina Toscana's focus is on creating <u>small plates</u> of authentically Italian dishes. Artfully-plated small portions allow for presentation of bolder flavors; diners have the opportunity to taste a broader palate of flavors in a single meal.
	Menus will be updated seasonally. Signature menu items include: <i>bacala croquette</i> —salt-cod croquettes with horseradish aioli; <i>olive fritte</i> filled with sun-dried tomatoes and gorgonzola, cornichons, onions and pesto fonduta; <i>ravioli alla brasata</i> —braised beef short rib filled pasta with mushroom and red wine demi-glace; roasted chicken, chorizo and porcini mushroom risotto; <i>caciucco</i> —a rich Ligurian seafood stew simmered in saffron broth with grilled piadina and garlic aioli.
	Included in the small plates options are <u>exotic salumi</u> and <u>artisanal cheeses</u> , including <i>burrata</i> —hand-made un-spun mozzarella sliced and served with roasted peppers and fresh basil pesto. Hand-rolled pastas are a hallmark of Piccolina Toscana. Stone-hearth pizzas, soups and salads round out the menu.
	The new open-display <u>dessert</u> kitchen is indicative of how big a part dessert plays in the Piccolina Toscana experience. Diners can watch seasonal desserts being made or select from a daily-changing selection of a half-dozen gelati. In fact, dessert-only diners often drop in for late night <i>pumpkin beignets</i> with caramel dipping sauce.
Wine and Spirits:	Piccolina Toscana offers great wines at every price point. Many selections are from boutique wineries that are outside the mainstream; in other words, wineries that focus on good wine, not advertising. Piccolina Toscana stocks only premium spirits and its cocktail menu changes seasonally.
Décor:	"Contemporary Rustic" best describes the décor at Piccolina Toscana. Styled after a loft, the dining room décor features painted brick, rescued barn wood and art. Oversized color panels of modern art by renowned local artist Vicki Vinton sit in contrast to a folksy, chalkboard-style mural which reflects a real, hand-scripted Italian recipe. The floor is an iridescent Italian porcelain tile. The base colors are muted whites and grays with pops of exciting color coming from seating. Modern plateware and simple kitchen-towel style napkins accentuate the negative space.
Atmosphere:	The communal atmosphere was designed to feel like a big party. Less like a family dinner, and more like watching the <i>Palio</i> in Siena. The open dining room is a place to see your friends and for your friends to see you, and for everyone to see the kitchen, engendering the feeling that you are part of a shared experience. A custom made high-top community table made of welded steel and rescued barn timbers is perched in front of the elevated pastry kitchen. Also adding to the convivial feel of the restaurant: round booths, which let diners have their own party within a party. A backlit, sheer black curtain defines the private dining area, which can be arranged for intimate or large private parties. Patio can accommodate large and small parties for dining.

KEY STAFF AND BIOS



Dan Butler

Chef and Owner of Piccolina Toscana.

Chef Dan Butler is the creative force behind two of Delaware's top restaurants, Piccolina Toscana and Deep Blue Bar and Grill, located in Wilmington, as well as Toscana Catering (which holds the exclusive catering rights to Hagley Museum and Library, as well as Hagley's on-site Belin House Organic Café) and Toscana To Go. His network of restaurants extends into Pennsylvania, with Brandywine Prime Seafood and Chops at the Chadds Ford Inn and Bistro on the Brandywine, both in Chadds Ford. Restaurants in the "Big Chef Guy" conglomerate are favorites of crowds and critics alike. Butler trained at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, and forged his culinary career in leading restaurants in Washington, DC, and Florida. He has since received many honors and awards for his creative cuisine and community involvement, including Young Delawarean of the Year, the Wilmington Award, and numerous Best of Delaware, Best of Philly and News Journal Readers Choice awards.

Through Piccolina Toscana, Butler works with innumerable charities and causes including Meals with the Masters (benefitting Meals on Wheels Delaware), Ministry of Caring, Slow Food Brandywine Valley, and through Artisan Kitchens, the statewide Farm to School Network.

Robbie Jester

Chef de Cuisine of Piccolina Toscana.

Chef Robbie Jester graduated with high honors from the Culinary Institute of America, quickly making his mark at the DuPont Country Club and Hotel DuPont in his early twenties. From there Jester took the position of Sous Chef at Toscana. With the departure of its previous chef, Jester quickly became Chef de Cuisine of Toscana Kitchen+Bar. Jester worked hand-in-hand with Chef/Owner Dan Butler on the renovation and menu for Piccolina Toscana. Jester was one of a handful of chefs chosen to cook for Maryland's "Buy Local Challenge" issued by the Governor in 2009 and 2010. Jester is also the Head Chef for *Farm Dinners on the Shore*, a not-forprofit venture that executes unique dining experiences using local products in vineyards and farms on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Jester is also a member of Slow Food Brandywine Valley.

Additional Key Staff

Sous Chef: Angelica Zavala Pastry Chef: Jayne Pawlikowski General Manager: John Narvaez

ATTACHMENTS



Menus:

Current as of January 10, 2011

- o Dinner
- o Wine, Beer and Cocktails
- o Dessert
- o Sunday Brunch
- o Sunday Dinner

Recent Special Events

o Feast of the Seven Fishes

News Articles:

Delaware Today, January 2011, "A Hit at Hagley" by Matt Amis

Out & About, January 2011, "What's In a Name?" by Dan Butler

The News Journal, November 28, 2010, "Taste of Delaware: New focus, same authenticity at Piccolina Toscana" by Patricia Talorico

The Hunt Magazine, October 22, 2010, "Piccolina Toscana Opens; Trolley Square restaurant gets fresh look"

The News Journal, Second Helpings Blog, October 11, 2010, "Toscana chefs spend time in Michelin two-star kitchen" by Patricia Talorico

MEDIA QUOTES

The News Journal, December 12, 2010, "Taste of Delaware: Delawareans ate well in 2010, and here's how," by Patricia Talorico

Restaurateur Dan Butler renovated Toscana, his flagship Trolley Square eatery, yet again. This old favorite has a fresh look and new name -- Piccolina Toscana. Bacala croquettes and pumpkin doughnuts from the energized staff shouldn't be missed.

Spark, December 28, 2010, "Best Food of 2010," Kelly Housen's pick

Best Food of 2010: Short rib ravioli at Piccolina Toscana. I have a soft spot in my heart for Toscana, as it's where my man and I went on our first date. But the food is what always keeps this Trolley Square spot on the top of my go-to list. From the short rib ravioli to the tender meatballs, to the sweetly indulgent French toast, the kitchen here is at the top of its game.

salumi

- \$3 each
 - Bresaola Air-dried beef

Salami toscana Dried and cured pork

- Pepperoni Spicy pork
- Prosciutto Crudo San Daniele
- Chorizo Spanish sausage

artisinal cheeses

^{\$}4 each

Aged Pecorino Toscano Tuscan sheep's milk

Gorgonzola Piccante Strong, blue veined cheese

Caprino Semistagionato Aged goat's milk

Mozzarella Fresca Handmade, in-house

Parmiggiano Reggiano The king of cheeses

Robiola soft-ripened simple cream

platti piccoli (small/full)

small plates

Polpetti 6

Veal and pork meatballs with sweet onion demiglace

Fritto misto di mare 8/15

Mixed seafood including calamari, scallops and fish, dredged in seasoned flour and flash fried

*Carpaccio di manzo 6/12

Beef tenderloin sliced thinly and served raw with reggiano, onions, capers, avocado, lemon and truffle oil

Crudo di pesce bianco 7

Scarlet snapper seasoned with peppers, citrus, onion and Tuscan olive oil

Gamberi in burro 5

Shrimp seasoned with smoked paprika and poached in butter served with cannelini and cucumber

Carciofini dorati 6

Sautée of artichokes, cipollini and mushrooms with sage and white wine, gratinée with aged Pecorino Toscano

Terrina Piccolina 7

Country Style braised short rib terrine with pickled pear, micro salad, and grilled bread

Polpo 8

Grilled Octopus marinated in lemon and garlic tossed with oven-dried tomatoes and Arugula

Olive fritte 6

Olives filled with sun-dried tomatoes and gorgonzola, cornichons, & onions lightly fried with pesto fonduta

Burrata 6/12

Hand-made un-spun mozzarella sliced and served with roasted peppers and fresh basil pesto

Pance al forno 7/13

Slow-roasted pork belly over a spot of polenta with scallions and rich pork demi-glace

Ossa di midollo di vitello 7

Grilled veal marrow bones served with roasted garlic, toasted brioche, and truffle oil

Bacala croquette 6/12 Salt-cod croquettes with horseradish aioli

soups and salads (small/full)

pastas (small/full)

Capellini al pomodoro 8/14

Imported angel hair pasta tossed simply in light pomodoro

Tortellini 9/16

Fresh pasta rolled with mortadella and ricotta in a sun-dried tomato and cream sauce

Risotto 9/16

Roasted Chicken, Chorizo, and Porcini mushrooms folded into creamy risotto

Mezzaluna di zucca 8/15

Fresh pasta filled with butternut squash & ricotta in brown butter, sage, pine nuts, & aged Toscano Cheese

Ravioli alla brasata 12/20

Braised beef short rib filled pasta with mushroom and red wine demi-glace

Diamante di robiolia 10/18

Diamond shaped pasta filled with Robiola and ricotta cheese in a white wine, tomato, butter sauce

Pasta integrale 9/16

Whole wheat fettuccine with artichokes, white wine, cipollini, pine nuts and Pecorino Toscano

Fettuccine Bolognese 13/23

Hand rolled fettuccine pasta in a sage scented veal Bolognese sauce

Linguine di mare 14/24

Seafood stew including clams, mussels, calamari, fin fish and scallops simmered in white wine and olive oil

entrées (small/full)

Caciucco 15/28

Rich Ligurian seafood stew simmered in saffron broth with grilled piadina and garlic aioli

Vitello ai carboni 32

Grilled veal chop with vinaigrette gnocchi, spinach, roasted garlic, roasted tomato

*Bistecca 28

Grilled strip loin with roasted cipollini, bacon, brussels sprouts, red wine demi-glace

Arista di maiale 14/24

Roasted pork loin stuffed with fresh herbs and garlic served over polenta with roasting jus

Zampa di agnello 25

Braised lamb shank with gorgonzola risotto

*Salmone grigliato 14/24

Grilled wild salmon with arugula and roasted plum tomatoes topped with citrus vinaigrette

Faraona selvaggia 13/23

Roasted game hen with lemon and rosemary served with patate fritte

⊖ \$9 each

Individually sized, hearth baked

di Parma

Tender prosciutto, goat cheese, rosemary, arugula and mozzarella ai Funghi

Figaro

Figs, Gorgonzola, crisp pancetta and truffle honey

Butternut squash bisque 5/9

Creamy butternut squash soup scented with local honey and garnished with a goat cheese ravioli

Cesare salad 4/7

House greens 4/7

Kitchen salad 7/13

Mixed greens, grilled vegetables and chicken, tomato, olives, mozzarella, Parmiggiano Reggiano, hard boiled egg, crispy onions, Prosciutto, Roasted Shallot Dressing

Caprese inverno 5/9

Roasted Tomato, House Made Mozzarella, Basil

Insalata Toscana 4/8

White bean, roasted plum tomato, prosciutto, arugula

"BLT" 6/12

Slow roasted belly of pork, tomatoes, Arugula, creamy gorgonzola dressing

Executive Chef Robbie Jester

Chef/Owner Dan Butler

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Sautéed exotic mushrooms. ricotta and fontina

Fiorentina

Spinach, roasted tomatoes and fresh mozzarella

Margherita

Classic tomato, fresh mozzarella and fresh basil

O

Arrabiata

Saluni, tomato sauce, fresh mozzarella and red pepper flakes

Quattro Formaggi

4 cheeses mozzarella, fontina, Gorgonzola and Reggiano

toscana

Sparking by the glass

Prosecco, Bele Casel NV, Veneto 9.50 Citrus flower aromas and a persistent almond-flavored finish. A refreshing starter.

Cava, Dibon NV Catalan, Spain 7.50 Rich toasty character with berry aromas and creamy texture.

Moscato, Montelliana "Annalisa" Veneto 7

Lively, fruity, and sweet; a great apéritif or alternative to White Zinfandel.

white by the glass

Verdicchio, Brunori "Le Gemme"

2009 Marche 8.50

A wine of structure and finesse, with beautiful aromatics and a lovely, nutty finish.

Sauvignon Blanc, Lockwood

2009 Monterey, California 7.50

Dry and mouthwateringly crisp with flavors of grapefruit and pear.

Chardonnay, Irony

2008 Napa, California 8

Rich tropical fruit aromas and ripe varietal flavors are balanced by the lively acidity.

Pinot Grigio, Lagaria

2009 Friuli 7

Light, crisp, and minerally with a floral bouquet. A great starter wine.

Vernaccia di San Gimignano, Fontaleoni

2009 Toscana 8

Light, crisp, and bone dry with flavors of nuts and dried fruit.

$\gamma \in \mathcal{O}$ by the glass

Chianti, Toscolo

2008 Toscana 7.50

Supple, fruity and flavorful on the palate with appealing balance and versatility.

Merlot, Chad

2007 Napa, California 9

Declassified Havens Merlot from one of the greatest vintages in Carneros Merlot history.

Pinot Noir, Grayson

2009 California 8

Ripe raspberry aromas layered with notes of red cherry and a silky finish.

Malbec, High Note

2009 Mendoza, Argentina 8.50 Brilliant violet color accompanied by rich blackberry and black cherry aromas and flavors.

^adraught beer

Peroni Pale Lager Italy 16 Mile Amber Sun Ale Delaware Anchor Steam California Dogfish Head 60 Minute IPA Delaware Blue Moon Belgian White Colorado Twin Lakes Greenville Pale Ale Delaware

bottled beer

16 Mile Blues' Golden Ale (22oz) Allagash Tripel Ale Amstel Light Brooklyn Oktoberfest Chimay "Red" Chimay "White" **Delirium Tremens** Dogfish Head 90min IPA Flying Dog Tire Bite Golden Ale He'Brew Genesis Brown Ale Heavy Seas Loose Cannon IPA Heineken Light Magic Hat #9 Pale Ale Malheur 10 Belgian Ale North Coast Scrimshaw Pilsner Pilsner Urquell Piraat Golden Belgian Ale Post Road Pumpkin Ale **Red Stripe** Rogue Dead Guy Ale Rogue Mocha Porter Saison DuPont Samuel Adams Imperial Stout Samuel Smith Nut Brown Ale Sierra Nevada Pale Ale Stella Artois Stone Arrogant Bastard Ale (22oz) Stoudts Scarlet Lady Ale **Troegs Sunshine Pilsner** Troegs Troegenator Double Bock (22oz) Victory Golden Monkey Tripel Victory Hop Devil Ale Yuengling Lager

specialty cocktails

Toscana Limonata 8 Our freshly-squeezed lemonade spiked with cherry, blueberry, ginger or pomegranate vodka

White Peach Cosmo 8

Peach vodka, triple sec, white cranberry juice and fresh lime

Old Fashioned 8

Cabernet Sauvignon, Sawbuck

2008 Mendocino, CA 8

Aromas of red raspberries and dusty chocolate with hints of toasty oak and spice.

Barbera d'Asti, Ferraris

2009 Piemonte 8.50

Vinified in stainless steel showing pristine fruit aromas supported by considerable structure.

Rosso Piceno, Brunori

2009 Marche 9

A juicy, supple, and vibrant blend of Montepulciano and Sangiovese. fruit.

Blanton's Single Batch Bourbon, muddled fruit, sugar, and a dash of bitters

Gin Blossom 8

St-Germain Elderflower Liqueur, Pinnacle Gin, club soda and a twist

Daiquiri 8

The non-frozen classic of white rum, fresh squeezed lime and sugar

Principessa 8

Patron Silver, Citronage and fresh squeezed lime on the rocks

Pomegranate Martini 8

Pinnacle Pomegranate Vodka, fresh lemon, splash of pomegranate juice and Prosecco floater



Join us for our \$5 Happy Hour in the Lounge Monday – Friday 4^p to 7^p

Coldessert list)

Banana cream tart 8

Coconut macadamia crust with rum anglaise

Pumpkin doughnuts 8

With cinnamon raisin mousse, caramel butterscotch sauce

Tiramisú 7

Classic Venetian espresso and mascarpone dessert

Biscotti 6

A variety of hand made twice-baked cookies

Espresso "float" 9

Bailey's gelato with express and chocolate chip biscotti

Spiced panna cotta 7

With raisin, carrot and walnut salad and maple syrup foam

Chocolate mousse 9

On a moist chocolate cake with white chocolate chantilly

House-made gelati & sorbetti 7

Stroll to the display case to see today's variety



Chef/Owner Dan Butler Pastry Chef Jayne Pawlikowski

*food items that may be served raw or under cooked increase the possibility of food borne illness.

sunday brunch menu

\$20 (kids under 10 \$5) rom Butternut squash soup Smoked Salmon Caesar Salad Penne Pasta with olives, peppers and prosciutto Linguine with basil pesto and sun-dried tomatoes Chilled grilled vegetables and goat cheese Fresh fruit salad Breakfast breads with honeyed mascarpone and confiture Mini-desserts kitchen the Egg dishes served with crisped pancetta Standard Preparations Cooked to order Fritatta del Giorno Pancetta, fontina and mushrooms Uova Fra Diavlo Poached eggs atop a brioche crouton with spicy tomato sauce Strip and Eggs With bacon cipollini and brussels sprouts, cream, red wine demi glace Brioche French Toast with butter and maple syrup French Toast with espresso batter and sweetened mascarpone and maple syrup Dayboat Scallops pan-seared with Kennett Sq mushrooms, truffle and ricotta cream Pasta Integrale Hand rolled whole wheat pasta with cherry tomato, arugula, toasted pine nuts and aged pecorino toscano Tortellini Hand rolled pasta filled with mortadella and ricotta in sun-dried tomato cream sauce.

Chef/Owner Dan Butler

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Executive Chef Robbie Jester *food items that may be served raw or under cooked increase the possibility of food borne illness.

sunday dinner buffet

^{\$}20 (kids ^{\$}10)

from the buffet

Butternut squash bisque Spinach Salad Fresh mozzarella and tomato salad Linguine with pesto and sundried tomato salad

Pancetta stuffed clams

Marinated artichokes

with red onion, tomato and mushrooms

Breadsticks olive bread, piadina

Tortellini in sundried tomato and cream sauce

Penne Pasta Bacon and thyme and cheese

Pollo alla Cacciatore "Hunter's chicken"

Grilled vegetables

Eggplant Parmigiana

Dessert minis

from the kitchen

piatti piccoli (small/full)

House Greens 4/7

Kitchen Salad 7/13

Mixed greens, grilled vegetables, tomato, olives, mozzarella, chicken, Parmiggiano Reggiano, hard boiled egg, crispy onions, Prosciutto, Roasted Shallot Dressing

Bacala croquette 6/12

Salt-cod croquettes with horseradish aioli

Burrata 6/12

Hand-made un-spun mozzarella sliced and served with roasted peppers and fresh basil pesto

pizzette 9each

Individually sized brick-hearth baked

Di Parma

tender prosciutto, goat cheese, rosemary, arugula and mozzarella

Margherita

classic tomato, fresh mozzarella and basil

Figaro

figs, Gorgonzola, crisp pancetta and truffle honey

Quattro Formaggi (4 cheeses)

mozzarella, fontina, Gorgonzola and Reggiano

pastas (small/full)

Ravioli alla brasata 12/20

Braised beef short rib filled pasta with mushroom and red wine demi-glace

Linguine di mare 14/24

Seafood stew including clams, mussels, calamari, fin fish and scallops simmered in white wine and olive oil

Tortellini 9/16

Pasta rolled with Ham, mortadella and ricotta in a sun-dried tomato and cream sauc

Capellini al pomodoro 8/14

Imported angel hair pasta tossed simply in light pomodoro

entrées

Vitello ai carboni 32

Grilled veal chop with vinaigrette gnocchi, spinach, roasted garlic, roasted tomato,

Bistecca 28

Grilled strip loin with roasted cippolini onions, bacon, Brussels sprouts, red wine demiglace

Salmone grigliati 24

Grilled wild salmon with Arugula and roasted plum tomatoes topped with citrus vinaigrette



Chef/Owner Dan Butler Executive Chef Robbie Jester

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feast of the seven fishes

wednesday dec 15th friday, dec 24th reservations required seating available from 5-10^{pm} ^{\$}75^{/person*} with wine ^{\$}55^{/person*} without wine

appetizer (family style)

- · bacala croquettes with horseradish aioli
- kumamoto oyster with caviar and prosecco mignonette
- crab and arugula crostini with lime and ginger
- cava dibon brut riserve

i first

- roasted butternut squash soup, smoked mussels, truffle
- vernaccia di san gimignano, fontaleoni

secon*a*

- chili and semolina dusted smelt over frisee with pancetta and vinaigrette
- gavi, masera

third

- ·lobster agnolotti with bagna cauda
- irony chardonnay

fourth

- saffron poached hake with leek and vegetables
- falanghina, cantina del taburno

9 dessert

 panna cotta with hot chocolate and graham cracker tuille

* gratuity not included

Chef/Owner Dan Butler Executive Chef Robbie Jester

Popular restaurateurchef Dan Butler is making history at Hagley Museum and Library in Wilmington.

A Hit at Hagley

Dan Butler is bringing a little *quattro formaggi* to Worker's Hill. The Piccolina Toscana chef has taken over operations of The Belin House, the café on the grounds of Hagley Museum and Library.

As Hagley's exclusive on-site caterer, Butler gets to work his magic at picturesque facilities like the Soda House and the Hagley Library. "That's the easy part," Butler says. "But for me to run the café is a challenge. People aren't there because of my café. They are there because they're interested in seeing the museum and they want to get something to eat." Butler, along with Belin chef Roy Eckbold, lures diners with local, mostly organic snacks, sandwiches and salads, plus a few crossover hits from Toscana. House-made granola and blueberry lemonade are big hits at Belin. Those looking for bigger bites can enjoy a slow-roasted turkey breast sandwich with pancetta and spicy mayonnaise on a crunchy stirato roll, or a grilled veggie sandwich.

Of course, there's always the tortellini and pizza, which has been winning buzz for 20 years—available now at the 200-year-old institution. —*Matt Amis* **130** FINDING THE NEW FLAVOR AT AN OLD FAVORITE

134 LUCA BANKS ON ITALIAN IN MILLSBORO

What's in a Name?

A restaurateur struggles with branding

By Dan Butler

ou can't judge a book by its cover (contrary to what most book-cover designers will tell you). But you can certainly tell something about it from its title.

Possibly one of the most important decisions a restaurateur can make is the name of his or her restaurant.

Several years ago, I was well into plans for a new seafood restaurant in downtown Wilmington, called AquaGrill. Opening day was just a few weeks away and construction was moving fast. At a wine tasting for the new list, I was excited about telling a purveyor visiting from New York about the details of my vision for this new place—cutting-edge fish preparations, an exciting wine list, raw bar with eight different oysters. To which he exclaimed, "Sounds like a cool new restaurant in SoHo called" wait for it—"AquaGrill."

As I lifted myself from the floor, I thought about how many things I'd had printed with the words 'AquaGrill' and my nifty new logo on them. I realized I couldn't start all over searching for the right name.

I swear that I'd never heard of AquaGrill before (although who knows if I'd subconsciously poached the name) and I had no intention of growing AquaGrill into a chain or moving into bigger-city territory. Perhaps the owner of this restaurant in New York won't have any objection to my using the name as well, I thought.

I wrote a very polite note and mailed it off to Jeremy Marshall of AquaGrill in New York. Three days later, I received a call from Jeremy stating politely but in no uncertain terms that, no, it was not all right for me to use his name. But he was sympathetic to my troubles because he too had to change the name of his restaurant when he discovered one similarly named in Florida. "I came up with a name that's way cooler and I'm sure you'll do the same," he said. A few years ago, I stopped in AquaGrill and left a business card, along with a short note for Jeremy that said, "You were right. Deep Blue is way cooler!"

A restaurant's name is really the first opportunity to make an impression on customers. Before a guest steps foot in a new restaurant, the name evokes an image of what might be in store. Columbus Inn, the Green Room, Washington Street Ale House, and Big Fish Grill are aptly named restaurants because they sound like the kind of places they are. There's a reason that Vincente's isn't Vinny's and Five Guys isn't Cinq Freres. The restaurant experience is so visceral, so personal, that impressions are everything. And a name is so intertwined with that impression.

So if a restaurant's name is so important, what bonehead (me) would work so hard for years to build his name, only to change it *three times* in the course of 20 successful years?

I can explain.

Toscana Kitchen + Bar was the third iteration of my restaurant in Trolley Square. The restaurant was originally named Griglia Toscana when it first opened in 1991. The mellifluous Italian name meaning the Tuscan Grill was routinely butchered by well-intentioned but decidedly American guests (owing, most certainly to the restaurant's location: America). The de facto name of the restaurant became simply *Toscana* (which was also butchered into Toscano's, Tuscanny's, etc.).

Upon the first renovation, one of the simplest goals I set for the new restaurant (in addition to scrapping the entire menu, format, and design) was to rename it something simpler for the indigenous Americans to pronounce. Tavola Toscana, 'the Tuscan Table,' failed at that goal miserably. *Toscana* and its close approximations remained the everyday name of the restaurant.

Toscana Kitchen + Bar followed. It was not only successful as a restaurant, the title was four simple words, at least three of which my customers could really embrace. But by then the "Kitchen + Bar" part became superfluous.

Each name, with its varying degrees of "pronouncability," referred to aspects within the restaurant. *Griglia* featured mostly grilled items with a Tuscan slant. *Tavola* had a large antipasto display greeting guests as they entered, while *Kitchen* + *Bar* had a more mainstream, approachable menu with a happening bar.

So this year, as we turn 20, Toscana gets another new name: Piccolina Toscana, which literally means little, Tuscan girl. But it can also be construed to mean "cute little Toscana." It really refers to our new small-plate menu, but I found the imagery of an innocent country girl holding a flower (our new logo) to be very appealing.

I should've known better. In our very first focus group meeting to discuss this and numerous other decisions, one of the participants asked, quite seriously, "So, what does the new restaurant have to do with pickles?"



Dan Butler is the owner of Piccolina Toscana as well as Deep Blue and Brandywine Prime. Learn more about his restaurants at bigchefguy.com.



www.delawareonline.com

November 28, 2010

Taste of Delaware: New focus, same authenticity at Piccolina Toscana

By PATRICIA TALORICO

One of Wilmington restaurateur Dan Butler's strengths is being in tune with diners in northern Delaware.

Twenty years ago, he sensed that they wanted more than red-gravy Italian-American dishes and gave the city Griglia Toscana, which offered fresh Italian cooking in a bright, sophisticated setting. It became a quick success.

Throughout the years, Butler has seemed ready to shed the name and look of his flagship Trolley Square operation more often than most people change cars, but he also is well aware that one of the restaurant industry's biggest sins is boring the audience.

While there is something comforting about a restaurant that remains exactly the same for decades, attention spans are short, and dining out budgets are smaller than ever before. It does not take much for diners looking for more casual options to start flirting with other eateries. Lose their interest for even a moment, and, before you know it, they are cheating regularly and are ready for a divorce.

Toscana is a restaurant that I have enjoyed since it opened in 1991. The furniture has changed through the years, but the core approach has not. The wine selection is smart, thoughtful and well-matched with solid cooking and consistent, reliable food. Creamy risottos and silky pastas long have been the house specialties. The cuisine may not have always been truly Tuscan, but it has never been hard to find Tuscan delights like *cinghiale*, or wild boar, and *bistecca*, or grilled steak.

That is not to say there have not been a few bumps. But if the cooking became slightly off-kilter, Butler, a Culinary Institute of America graduate who owns several other eateries now, rolled up his sleeves and stood in front of the stove in the open kitchen to make things right. It is a control freak trait that earns admiration.

The restaurant was rechristened Piccolina Toscana in October -- but, let's get real, everyone is still calling it Toscana -- and the new incarnation emphasizes small plates and more inexpensive bites. Other restaurants are doing the same, but not everyone is doing it as well.

Butler remains a hands-on chef, but he has assembled a strong A-Team for daily kitchen duties. Chef de cuisine Robbie Jester and pastry chef Jayne Pawlikowski, in particular, are two of the talented, rising stars among the crew who are bringing energy and passion to the new menu.



Pastry chef Jayne Pawlikowski works at Piccolina Toscana.



The main dining room at the remodeled Toscana, now Piccolina Toscana, in Wilmington. (The News Journal/WILLIAM BRETZGER)

PICCOLINA TOSCANA

The Rockford Shops, 1412 N. Du Pont St., Wilmington; 654-8001; www.piccolinatoscana.com.

Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 5 to 10 p.m. Mon.-Wed.; 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 5 to midnight Thu.-Fri.; 5 to midnight Sat.; 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 4 to 8 p.m. Sun.

The scoop: It's the third time in 20 years that Wilmington restaurateur Dan Butler has renovated and changed the name of his flagship Trolley Square eatery. The new Piccolina Toscana is now emphasizing a small plates menu. The restaurant also offers a Sunday brunch, a Sunday buffet family dinner and the kitchen is staying open until midnight Thursdays through Saturdays.

Tasteful finds: Prosciutto crudo (\$3); burrata (\$6/\$12) with roasted peppers and basil pesto; shrimp with cannellini (\$5); bacala croquette (\$6/\$12); grilled veal marrow bones (\$7); braised short rib ravioli (\$12/\$20); pumpkin doughnuts (\$8), banana cream tart, maple pear sorbetto (\$7).

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Regulars who have long held dear to the tortellini with sundried tomato cream sauce (\$9 for a small plate, \$16 for large or "full") will be happy to know it remains, as does the Caesar salad (\$4/\$7) and the complimentary breadsticks.

But venture outside of your comfort zone. This is a menu that you will want to plow through. Get a glass of prosecco (\$9.50) and enjoy rustic bites like Prosciutto San Daniele (\$3 each), which is a little sweeter and less saltier than its better known cousin Parma, and slices of the slightly pepper salami Toscana that are served with crunchy cornichons and pitted olives.

Put the fried baccala (\$6/\$12), terrific, crunchy, salted cod croquettes served with a kicky horseradish aioli, on the must-have list. It is one of my favorite bites of the year, and so is the kitschy presentation -- the fritters are served in a box of salted cod.

Some diners may wonder what is all the fuss about mozzarella. Try the homemade burrata, (\$6/\$12) a seductive and much more creamy and spreadable alternative, and you will understand the devotion to this oozy cheese. Seafood lovers should enjoy the butter-poached shrimp (\$5) sprinkled with smoky paprika and tossed with creamy cannellini beans. Another winner is a saute of artichokes, sweet cippolini onions and mushrooms in a sage-scented white wine sauce that is dusted with pecorino.

Those who want a Paleolithic eating experience can't go wrong with the roasted veal marrow bones (\$7). It doesn't get much better than spreading this rich, fatty goodness on a toasted brioche along with a schmear of roasted garlic (though, maybe, it would be a nice to have a crispy parsley salad on the side as a texture contrast?) As for those who turned their nose up at marrow? Well, too bad, that just means more for the rest of us primative eaters.

Polpetti, or veal and pork meatballs (\$6), are deeply flavored, but the dish was flawed by too much time in the pan which made the outside of the meatballs tough. Grilled octopus (\$8) suffered the same fate and was overcooked and chewy on two separate visits. Ravioli alla brasata, or braised beef short rib filled pasta squares, served with a mushroom and red wine demi-glace, however, is earthy, beefy and pretty terrific.

The individual pizzas (\$9) are fine, in fact even better than during previous Toscana visits, though my only plea with bakers is that they leave the pies in the hearth just a few moments longer. The crust could have used a few more of those beautiful blisters that had just started to develop.

Most servers are polished, but newbies could use a little more training. We asked for a description of the robiola during one visit and our server told us, quite honestly, he didn't know and didn't offer to check. (It's a soft, creamy cheese with a pungent aroma that is probably better as a starter rather than a meal concluder.)

But servers do a good job selling the desserts. Banana cream tart was as dreamy as promised and maple pear sorbetto, (\$7) topped with toasted almonds and pecans, was like biting into juicy, sweet fruit. And it would be hard to find a better autumn dessert than pumpkin doughnuts (\$8) that can be dipped in either cinnamon buttercream or a warm caramel butterscotch sauce.

The intoxicating aroma of the warm doughnuts clouded the table and just as we were breathing in the wonderful cinnamon perfume and enjoying a glass of Spanish cava (\$7.50), the moment was nearly spoiled when an employee began squirting the table next to ours with a chemical-smelling cleaning fluid that lingered in the air.

Seriously? I'm really hoping that this was just a momentary lapse in judgment. Butler wasn't there when this occurred and I can't imagine that he'd be happy with a buzz-kill practice that should end immediately at all eateries. Please, if you're going to clean a table, spray the fluid in a cloth in another area of the restaurant -- not in a busy dining room full of paying customers. Not only is it deal-breaker for diners trying to savor their food and wine, but it's a disservice to the chefs who are working hard creating wonderful food and aromas.

Renovations, tweaks and a lighter color palette have been made the dining room feel more open and buzzy. A blackboard painted with a pastry cream recipe, written in Italian, frames Pawlikowski's dessert station. Gone is the raised seating area which, to me, always felt like being banished to restaurant Siberia. The simple wooden tables, hightop communal table and rounded booths, padded with electric lime green fabric, now make it feel as though everyone has the primo see-and-be-seen seat.

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Photo credit: WILLIAM BRETZGER











Piccolina Toscana Opens

Trolley Square restaurant gets fresh look

October 22, 2010

Restaurateur Chef Dan Butler just can't leave well enough alone. He's re-invented his upscale Italian restaurant, Toscana, several times since the launch of his original Trolley Square endeavor, Griglia Toscana, which opened in 1991. Since then, Griglia Toscana has transformed into Tavola Toscana, and again into Toscana Kitchen+Bar. Next up:*Piccolina Toscana,* which opened in mid-October 2010.

As Toscana approaches its 20th birthday, it is undergoing perhaps its biggest transformation to date. "It's been a long time since our last renovation and I'm really looking forward to being able to treat our customers to a new experience," Butler explains. "I'm really excited about the fresh look and focus of the new restaurant."

Butler began the renovation process with some ideas in mind, and once the initial blueprints were drawn, he shared them with some of his faithful customers.

"I began the process by pulling together a handful of people once a week; I cooked them dinner, and utilized them as informal focus groups. And though I've never asked anyone's opinion before, I assured the participants that for one instance only, I'd have thick skin when they gave honest input," Butler jokes. "But the exercise was terrifically valuable. Some of the most significant features of the final design came about as a result of interaction with my customers and these focus groups."

Upon entering the new space, returning guests might become disoriented from all the changes. The floor is an Italian porcelain tile with an iridescent quality. The base colors are muted whites and grays with pops of exciting color coming from seating and linens. Rounded booths add to the hip décor and create areas for individual parties. The custom made high-top community table made of welded steel and rescued barn timbers is perched in front of the elevated pastry kitchen. A backlit, sheer black curtain defines the private area, where the backdrop is a whitewashed brick and stone wall adorned with vibrant original artwork by Vicki Vinton. A huge, rustic wooden hutch dominates another wall.

Toscana closed for renovation on October 3. Time lapse photography of the construction below:

But the biggest changes for the new restaurant are not cosmetic. "It's more about a new attitude," explains Butler. "We want to cook for people the way they want to eat today. We'll feature small plates—everything will be available in smaller, less pricey portions of truly flavorful food. We'll be open later into the evening so that people can stop in after parties, after work or after dinner in other restaurants for dessert. A high premium is placed on hospitality. Our servers will be nothing if not friendly. Times change and I think Piccolina Toscana will be very much a restaurant for these times."



www.delawareonline.com

October 11, 2010

Toscana chefs spend time in Michelin two-star kitchen

By PATRICIA TALORICO

Bright lights, big city, big flavors.

While the former Toscana Kitchen + Bar in Wilmington has been closed for renovations and retooling since Oct. 3, its staff hasn't been kicking back and relaxing.

Chef de cuisine Robbie Jester and pastry chef Jayne Pawlikowski spent a week in the kitchen of Alto, a New York City, two-star Michelin rated Italian restaurant owned by Michael White.

Jester and Pawlikowski just completed a "stage," or short internship, at the East 53rd Street restaurant.

White, the owner of five Michelin stars, was a guest chef last spring at the Wilmington Meals from the Masters Celebrity Chefs' Brunch.

He also owns such New York eateries as Convivio (one Michelin star) and Marea, a Michelin two-star spot that was named the country's best new restaurant by the James Beard Foundation.

White's also gotten a bit of press lately about allegedly poaching employees from other NYC eateries.

Jester, a Culinary Institute of America graduate, says the level of hospitality at Alto was impressive.

"Of all the things I learned, I think that's one that will serve me for a long time to come."

Pawlikowski says the dazzling plate presentations "absolutely blew me away. It's not just being in awe of watching a plate being prepared, their techniques and professionalism showed me the art of simplicity. And that's not an easy thing."

Toscana, which is being rechristened Piccolina Toscana, is scheduled to reopen Friday.

Owner Dan Butler says he's looking forward to the chefs showing off what they learned at the Trolley Square eatery that will focus on small plates, artisanal cheeses, salumi and desserts including homemade gelati.