

THE
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Smoke-free: Bacco Ristorante boasts tradition, but rolls with the times

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Bacco Ristorante of Southfield has been in the news a fair amount lately. First, the upscale Italian restaurant announced it was scaling back portions and prices, then for going smoke free.

Operating in Southfield since 2002, Bacco draws on five decades of family experience.

Bacco founder Luciano Del Signore learned the restaurant trade at his parents' Fonte d'Amore, a longtime Livonia fixture.

On its own, Bacco has become a favorite of many diners - including one special celebrity - and has received numerous awards as the Top Table award from Gourmet Magazine and was named one of America's Top Restaurants by Zagat. Del Signore was also nominated by the James Beard Foundation for the Great Lakes Region's 2008 Best Chef Award.

He took time out to talk about his Northwestern Highway restaurant.

Why the decision to go smoke free?

To produce a clean air environment for my customers and staff.

Since I take so much pride in finding the best ingredients that are all natural and organic for the food it only makes sense to provide clean air as well.

We understand you've also made some (price) changes to your menu. What are they?

What we have done is made size reductions! With size reductions come price reductions.

We have noticed people eating smaller over the years, so we reduced the portion of our dishes by 35 percent as well as the price.

We have not compromised the quality of our food in any way.

What are your specialties?

Puree soups - never with cream or butter - roasted Branzino, strozapretti Norlina and house made Italian sausage.

What type of atmosphere do you provide for your customers?

It's a casual elegant atmosphere with a big city feel - warm and friendly in the bar.

What is your favorite story about the business?

My favorite story was the night before the Super Bowl in Detroit. It was a full dining room and we were waiting for our last table.

To our surprise, Mick Jagger walked in. He had booked under an alias. He was charming and enjoyable to serve and all who were in Bacco were thrilled to be dining in the same room.