

## Authentic Italian Cuisine With a Florida Flare

Written by Southwest Orlando Bulletin Staff

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Robert Mason (left), executive chef and director of food and beverage at Fiorella's Cucina Toscana, and

"W

e take our food here very seriously," said Robert Mason,

"We consider ourselves a freestanding restaurant that happens to be in a very nice hotel." "We wanted a

"In the U.S., people don't generally think of hotels as dining destinations unless it is a holiday or special

Mason, an award-winning and celebrated chef who came from Grand Bohemian Hotel Orlando's The

Boheme restaurant, uses traditional Italian preparation methods to create northern Italian and Tuscan di

"I believe in the slow food movement, which is supporting local operators and farms," Mason said.

Whenever possible, he picks fresh herbs and vegetables from a garden he planted in the outside courtyard.

Included in the restaurant's dinner menu is a special section that changes weekly based on what is fresh

"This is a real value, because you are able to taste a little of everything that is featured that week," Maso

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In addition, all meat is organic and hormone-free.

“Buying higher-quality items makes my job easier, because I can consistently maintain my standards,” he said.

A substantial part of the breakfast, lunch and dinner menus includes what are known as super foods —

Fiorella’s also will accommodate special dietary needs.

“We don’t want anyone to hesitate to ask for a modification of any menu item,” Speicher said.

The menu extends beyond pasta by offering seafood, grilled meats and vegetarian entrees. Fiorella’s pizza

“This pizza is amazing; it has a crispy crust that is still chewy in the middle,” Speicher said.

Other items that can always be found on the menu are the crab-crusting grouper, lobster ravioli and formaggio, a baked goat cheese topped with fresh oven-dried tomatoes and served with Italian cracker bread.

“What I like about our menu is that it is approachable, and there is something for everyone,” Mason said.

Of course, wine pairing is an important component to Italian cuisine. Fiorella’s wine list focuses on North

Sometimes, choosing a wine can be overwhelming. Fiorella’s wine list is designed to be user-friendly. W

“People tend to order wines they recognize; however, we encourage our diners to experiment,” Speicher

Complementing the exceptional cuisine, Fiorella’s décor creates an ambiance that is distinctive and crea

The restaurant’s name is derived from the Italian word fiore, which means flower. Carrying this theme, th

Large circular glass light fixtures, resembling amber tortoiseshell, seem to float above diners, illuminating

The walls are a creamy Venetian plaster, and the tables are made from honey-colored acacia wood. The

By virtue of its location, The Westin Imagine Orlando welcomes many international travelers. Recently, M

**Fiorella’s Cucina Toscana is located in The Westin Imagine Orlando at 9501 Universal Blvd. in Or**

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