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Cafe Miranda: Rockland's Signature Eatery

Posted by admin on 2/14/12 • Categorized as Culinary Reviews



Chef Kerry Altiero Describes his Brick Oven Pizzas

Walk off Rockland's bustling Main Street about a half block down Oak St. and have a seat at one of Café Miranda's small café tables. You'll know right away that you are in someplace unpretentious, a tiny bistro with boisterous kitchen action spilling out into view behind the bar, a wood-fired brick oven (that's carbon neutral), and a hugely eclectic menu. At this point

you are just scratching the surface...you haven't yet looked around closely to discover funky decorations hanging on the walls like a genuine period "Hippies Use Side Door" sign or an old collectors edition double-belled Elvis Presley alarm clock above the bar. And the music selection definitely isn't canned or run-of-the-mill satellite radio. You might just be listening to extensive homemade song medleys from artists like the Doors and David Bowie.

But back to the food! The dishes served up here cater to almost every taste....from finicky 5 year olds to obsessed middle-aged gourmands. The vast menu can certainly be daunting but if you love the prospect of many top notch



Cafe Miranda's Idea of a Bread Basket

staples and some more daring creations based on as many locally sourced ingredients as possible, you have reached nirvana. Their motto "Because We Can" says it all! Entrees range from smoked meatloaf, massive burgers, a fully customized stir fry that can include local **Hiewa tofu**, Haddock enchiladas, house made pastas along with wood fired pizzas loaded with almost any topping you can imagine. While you're busy deciding, you'll get a heaping plate of their signature foccacia bread made daily in the brick oven. Chef/owner Kerry Altiero's original culinary inspiration came from his aunt's kitchen back in the coal mining hills of Pennsylvania. The shear contrast of her spicy meat balls and fresh tomato sauce with his mother's decidedly

drab potato-centric repertoire opened his eyes to the joys of culinary experimentation.

Since Altiero opened Cafe Miranda in 1993, he has maintained certain basic principals like promoting adventurous ethnic dishes using locally harvested



This Stir Fry Has Tufu Made Locally in
Maine

ingredients whenever possible, continually exploring new twists on multi-cultural cuisines, and most importantly, finding starring roles on the menu for Rockland's just caught seafood. Many vegetables come from Chef Altiero's own Headacre Farm and he even harvests his own fire wood to fuel the oven and outdoor patio stove!

I was so impressed with the (adult) drink offerings here that I skipped dessert! Who can help it with the huge selection of made-in-Maine beers like **Baxter Brewing Company's** IPA, **McGovern Oatmeal Stout**, and **Bar Harbor Real Ale**. Or how about a Gin & Tonic with **Back River Cranberry Gin** distilled at **Sweetgrass Farm in Union Maine**.

Photos courtesy of Steve Mirsky

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