

Joe Ricchio Blog

<http://portlandfoodcoma.blogspot.com/>

The first time I ever set foot in Café Miranda, Kerry Altiero was making bread. As I sat and watched while enjoying several beers, he explained to me that kneading the dough was not only something he did every day, but something he *needed* to do everyday in order to maintain his sanity. The first bite of the bread straight out of the oven was so good that it was evident this pattern had been going on for a long time...

It's an easy menu to get a little lost in, but that often isn't a bad thing, its all part of the eclectic experience that is Café Miranda.

Every dish has a story that accompanies it, and with the amount of dishes I generally enjoy at an average dinner with Kerry, that's a lot of stories. He doesn't like to use the term "fusion", but rather he prefers "non-comformist." That's the only way I could describe the "Jerry Fries," that I like to refer to as "Vietnamese Poutine." Why would you ever put bleu cheese, sambal oelek, cilantro, and lime on sweet potato fries? My first answer would be "because you're really stoned," and Kerry's would be "because it's fucking delicious."

Café Miranda is the kind of restaurant that you develop a relationship with over time. You can work your way up and down the menu, occasionally revisiting old favorites – like I said it's basically Kerry's autobiography. My personal favorite is the section of the menu entitled "My Italian Grandma," a collection of Italian-American comfort food classics including some of the best goddamn meatballs I've ever had.

What's interesting is that I've never actually had Kerry cook for me here. Every time I come in for dinner, he ends up sitting and eating with me. This way he can make sure that I won't just keep ordering the same thing (meatballs) and we can have random intimate moments, such as a mini-photo shoot of us re-enacting scenes from Disney's "Lady and the Tramp." We pummel bottle after bottle of wine, and always finish with a round of "all you can drink, pour your own" digestifs.

From the pink flamingos that greet you at the door, to the copy of "Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs" that greets you in the bathroom, this is the kind of restaurant where I feel most at home. It's got a warmth to it that I'm convinced isn't coming from the fact that I've had 14 glasses of wine, but from someone serving the food they love in it for a very long time.

See For Yourself.