

Vermilion ignites the tastebuds

Indian, Latin spices extend the flavor spectrum

FOOD NEWS

BY DENISE I. O'NEAL

Looking to paint the town red, perhaps, or just experience something out of the ordinary?

Vermilion, with its infusion of contemporary Indian and Latin cuisine, will get you off to a good start.

Executive Chef Maneet Chauhan has created a menu of upscale tapas, intriguing entrees and signature dishes that will lead your tastebuds on an epicurean excursion of tantalizing tastes and exotic spices.

Chef Chauhan's signature dishes include grilled snapper in a mint yogurt marinade, served with mango rice; tandoori skirt steak served on a bed of sauteed garlic spinach with fried plantain; blackened baby back ribs with a smoky tamarind sauce, served with yucca fries and sweet corn salsa; lobster tails scooped out and stewed in a coconut and curry leaf gravy, served on a bed of vegetable saffron pulao (rice), and jumbo prawns cooked in a tomato-based sauce with dried red chiles and curry leaves, served with fresh steamed rice.

Entrees include baby eggplants stuffed with a mixture of roasted Indian spices served with fresh parantha (flatbread); fresh mahi simmered in spicy peppered sauce served with fresh steamed rice; Indian goat curry with fresh steamed rice.

Tapas selections include grilled lamb chops in a spicy, lentil-based marinade on a bed of minty red onion salad; coconut and spice-flavored crab cake, served with green mango slaw and a side of panch puran tomato sauce (panch puran is a blend of five whole spices); seasonal seafood tossed with a hint of ginger and spice, served on a Chardonnay gelee; fried plantain dumplings with a date-pomegranate sauce, and ahi tuna seasoned in cilantro- and lime-based marinade, served with pickled red onions.

A selection of decadent desserts round out the menu. They include chai spice cake; orange bread pudding; Kahlua- or vanilla-flavored flan served with an exotic fruit salad of papaya, mango and guava, and Indian carrot pudding with sultanas and cashews served in an almond tulle cup.

Vermilion is at 10 W. Hubbard. For more information, call (312) 527-4060.

Super stats

It's that time of year again, when die-hard football fans and couch potatoes alike head to the



JIM FROST/SUN-TIMES

At Vermilion, which specializes in Indian/Latin American fusion cuisine, owner and managing partner Rohini Dey (left) and Executive Chef Maneet Chauhan plan to serve a variety of tapas (from left), lobster Portuguese and gazpacho shooters. From the dessert menu comes a frozen goat milk cajeta mousse with candied pecans on a Frangelico-flavored anglaise.

bars to enjoy the big game. Super Bowl Sunday rolls around Feb. 1 and local bars and eateries are hoisting a glass and some super food to the occasion. The game kicks off at 5:18 p.m. at Reliant Stadium in Houston.

■ Harry Caray's will host Super Bowl bashes at both its locations. Starting times are 4 p.m. at Kinzie Street and 4:30 p.m. in Rosemont. Added television sets will be placed around the dining area to accommodate all guests. Prizes and giveaways will be awarded throughout the game. Both locations will offer food specials that include the Holy Cow! burger, ribs, coleslaw and fries. Each location will offer its own specials as well.

Harry Caray's is at 33 W. Kinzie, (312) 828-0966, and at 10233 W. Higgins Rd., Rosemont, (847) 699-1200.

■ Joe's Superbowl Spectacular 2004 begins at 5:25 p.m. The bar will have more than 200 television sets operating. The cost is \$35, and includes a crowd-pleasing buffet fit for a gridiron-size appetite. Featured items will include grilled hamburgers, country fried chicken, baked lasagna, giant pretzels, fried zucchini, broccoli Cheddar bites, mini fish, corn dogs, creamy potato salad and pasta salad, and an open bar.

Joe's Bar is at 940 W. Weed. For more information, call (312)

337-3486.

■ Weber Grill Restaurant has a tempting offer for Super Bowl fans with big appetites. A game day party catered with hot-off-the-grill items from the restaurant's catering menu will feed your crowd. When ordering, you will be automatically entered to win a Weber Summit Silver gas grill, valued at \$999. Orders must be placed no later than 3 p.m. Saturday. The contest ends Sunday.

Weber Grill Restaurants are at 539 N. State, (312) 467-3000; 920 N. Milwaukee Ave., Wheeling, (847) 215-0996; 2331 Fountain Square, Lombard, (630) 953-8880.

■ P.J. Clarke's has options in its game plan, offering an in-restaurant party or takeout platter. Both locations will offer a special buffet priced at \$30, which includes chicken wings, ribs, chips and salsa, chili, and the restaurant's minnie burgers. Several platters are available.

P.J. Clarke's is at 1204 N. State, (312) 664-1650, and at 302 E. Illinois, (312) 670-7500.

A different s(o)uper bowl

Allgauer's on the Riverfront is hosting a Chicken S(o)uper Bowl Cook-off at 11 a.m. Saturday. The competition is open to all amateur chefs. First place is \$100, a Saturday night stay at the Hilton

Northbrook and Sunday brunch for four at Allgauer's. Second place is \$50. The third-place winner will receive \$25. Second- and third-place winners also receive a choice of a Friday night SeaFest dinner for two or a Sunday brunch for two at Allgauer's. All contestants will receive Sunday brunch for two.

Allgauer's is in the Hilton Northbrook, 2855 N. Milwaukee Ave., Northbrook. For more information on the contest, call (847) 729-7333, ext. 13.

Sushi brunch

The Dining Room at the Ritz-Carlton will feature a sushi brunch from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday. Kazutomo Osaki, owner of M. Square, and his team of sushi chefs joins resident chefs George Bumbaris and Sarah Stegner for the event. The restaurant's regular brunch items will also be available. The cost is \$59 for adults, \$15 for children ages 4-12.

The Dining Room at the Ritz-Carlton is at 160 E. Pearson. For more information, call (312) 573-5223.

If you have news about classes or other food events open to the public, send it at least two weeks in advance to: Food News, Chicago Sun-Times Food Section, 401 N. Wabash, Chicago 60611.