

ELITE

The Northwest Indiana Magazine of Fine Lifestyles

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Lucrezia

*Authentic Italian with
Midwestern flair*



Classical Connection: Northwest Indiana Symphony offers mass musical appeal

By Eloise Marie Valadez
Photos by Michael Roberts

Lucrezia Italian Ristorante

*Authentic trattoria cuisine
with Midwestern flair*



If exceptional Italian food and a welcoming atmosphere are what you crave in a dining experience, Lucrezia Italian Ristorante awaits you.

The eatery, in Crown Point's, historic downtown district, is the perfect place to settle in for a pleasant meal with family, friends or a special sweetheart. Blend its charming retro mansion environment with an appetizing menu, attractive bar area and friendly service and the eatery gets a thumbs up on all levels.

Lucrezia was established in November of 2003 by Nada and Michael Karas, who have long had a great love of quality Mediterranean-style food.

"We love Italian food," Nada Karas said, adding they also found the concept of Italian trattorias very attractive.

"If you go to Northern Italy, you'll see a lot of trattorias in old homes," she said.

Many of the trattorias focus on fresh and seasonal produce and tasty, home-style and unpretentious cooking. They wanted that to be the focus of their restaurant and menu as well.

"We were just in love with trattorias and that's really what Lucrezia is," she said.

"We also want to bring excellent food at a value to people," Nada Karas added.

The couple, of Serbian heritage, said they find the Mediterranean menu, with its pure flavors and fresh ingredients, particularly attractive.

Lucrezia Italian Ristorante, housed in the William Barringer Brown Mansion, dating from 1887, is the couple's second restaurant. The first, Lucrezia Café and Catering, also housed

in an old mansion in downtown Chesterton, was opened in 1998.

During a recent visit to the Crown Point restaurant, we were immediately struck by the charming mansion atmosphere. As you enter the building, you easily feel as though you're visiting someone's home for a special party.

After walking in we waited in the foyer to be seated. The wait wasn't very long before we were escorted to our window seat in the main dining room.

Two servers immediately greeted us, one supplying the menu and the other asking our drink preferences.

As we looked over the menu, I also glanced around at the restaurant's interior. Though this restaurant was housed in an old mansion, the atmosphere had a touch of modern décor mixed in. A bit of track lighting, a ceiling grid, granite tables and a fireplace in the main dining room are attractive features and provide charm. A few stained-glass windows are featured throughout and the bar area is also separated by a portion of stained glass.

According to Michael Karas, the couple wasn't interested in Lucrezia being "just an event" restaurant that people only

frequent on special occasions.

"We'd like it to be a place where people might want to go on a Tuesday night and maybe enjoy just a salad or pasta," he said.

And that's not a stretch because Lucrezia's menu has something for everyone. Whether you'd like a more formal meal of lamb shank or beef tenderloin or you just want spaghetti or rigatoni, you can get it here.

For our dinner, we started with the whole roasted garlic and olive oil (\$2.75) as an appetizer and then tried the yellow tomato salad (\$6.25).

Our entrées that evening were roasted duck (\$13.50) and chicken vesuvio (\$11.95).

The garlic appetizer, one of the restaurant's popular dishes, was a great way to begin the meal. We spread the tender garlic from the cloves onto bread and enjoyed it immensely. The yellow tomato salad was tasty as well with red onions, pine nuts, gorgonzola cheese and fresh basil.

Diners who like a sweet sauce will enjoy the duck entrée, which was tender and served with a marsala wine and sweet dried

Owners Nada and Michael Karas. Yellow tomato salad with gorgonzola cheese, red onions, pine nuts, fresh basil and olive oil. Grilled salmon (facing) with lemon dill cream sauce.

the basics

Lucrezia Italian Ristorante

302 S. Main St., Crown Point, (219) 661-LUCY

Hours: 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sundays through Thursdays; 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays.

Cuisine: Italian/Mediterranean.

Credit cards: All major charge cards accepted.

Reservations: Not accepted.





Grilled shrimp with lemon dill cream on a bed of red cabbage. Zuccotto (opposite) chocolate dome cake filled with white chocolate mousse and ground pistachios served with raspberry and chocolate sauces.

cherry sauce. Chicken fans won't go wrong ordering the vesuvio, which was served disjointed and pan-fried with garlic rosemary and roasted potatoes.

Nada Karas said the

restaurant's menu is predominately Northern Italian based.

"But we do specials all the time," she said, adding that executive chef Alfredo Anguiano is always open to trying

innovative dishes.

"We encourage him and the staff to be creative. The creative juices are always flowing in the kitchen," she said.

Specials, she said, often have a Southern Italian or

Mediterranean flair as well.

Among popular dishes on the Lucrezia menu are the calamari salad (\$6.50); four-cheese pizza (\$6.25); fettuccini al panna (\$9.50); rigatoni with braised sausage (\$9.95); veal limone

Siam Marina

Recommended by the Chef:

- Marina Escargot -
- Lobster & Mango
- Spring Rolls -
- Shrimp Cargot -
- Banana Curry Duck -
- Seafood Padthai -
- Sea Bass with
- Ginger Sauce -
- Soft Shell Crab -
- Ginger Lobster Tail -
- Spicy Grilled Halibut -



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(\$19.25); stuffed eggplant (\$10.95); pork braciola (\$15.95) and grilled lamb chops, (\$19.25).

Michael Karas said they want patrons to feel comfortable in

the restaurant and know that they can always get quality meals there.

He said he enjoys the food industry atmosphere and when he's at the restaurant he likes to greet and talk with customers.

"I like people," he said.

Lucrezia, which is on the Indiana State Register of Historic Sites, seats 100 people with an additional 10 people at bar stools.

The eatery occasionally features special dinners and also presents monthly wine classes.

Diners looking for stand-out dishes and a quaint yet modern environment in which to enjoy a meal will no doubt find it spending a little time at Lucrezia. ■



chefprofile

Kitchen experimentation isn't a mundane activity for Alfredo Anguiano.

"I like to try a bit of everything and enjoy coming up with different dishes," said Anguiano, executive chef of Lucrezia Italian Ristorante in Crown Point.

Anguiano has presided over the kitchen at the eatery since its debut in 2003.

At Lucrezia, Anguiano creates an assortment of dishes from seafood appetizers to flavorful salads, chicken entrées, veal recipes and traditional and innovative pastas.

"We always want to make sure the customer is happy," said Anguiano, who with Lucrezia's owners Nada and Michael Karas, regularly turns out new ideas for quality meals at the quaint Italian eatery.

According to Nada Karas, it's key to encourage the chef and the entire kitchen staff to be creative in the kitchen and never be afraid to try new things.

Though the owners work with Anguiano to tweak the menu occasionally, the chef has a lot of freedom in the kitchen.

Anguiano, who wasn't formally educated in the culinary field, said he basically learned as he went along.

"I learned the hard way," he said, laughing.

Anguiano said when he came to the United States from Mexico, he got his first job at a local restaurant.

"I worked at Cafe Borgia in Lansing, (Ill.) for 10 years," he said, adding that, though that was his first venture in the

restaurant business, he always had an interest in food and cooking.

"My grandmother used to sell homemade dinners in Mexico and I learned a lot from her," Anguiano said.

Even now, Anguiano, 33, said he remembers how flavorful the homemade dishes

were. They were always made with fresh and quality ingredients.

He's taken that focus with the meals he creates at Lucrezia.

"It's important to use fresh ingredients. The fresher the better," he said.

Anguiano, who works with a dedicated staff of cooks, also presides over the kitchen at the other Karas restaurant, Lucrezia Cafe and Catering in Chesterton.

He believes it's a good thing to be well-skilled in a variety of styles of cooking.

At Lucrezia, Anguiano regularly turns out myriad specials on a daily basis. While the menu basically remains the same, he creates two new pastas a day; a special appetizer, a veal dish and a special dessert of the day. There can be at least five or more specials featured on a given day.

A native of Leon, Mexico, Anguiano, lives in Chesterton.

Along with Anguiano, the Karases said they strive to continue to make Lucrezia an eatery that focuses on quality and customer service. ■

— By Eloise Marie Valadez

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