

HOME PLATE



Michael's Genuine Food & Drink

GETTING IT RIGHT FROM THE START

Text Megan Aquilina

SOMETIMES TRUSTING YOUR GUT is a surefire way to please the gourmet gullets of others. At least that has been the hallmark of Michael Schwartz's culinary career. At the age of 42, the renowned chef of Nemo fame has once again reinterpreted the recipe for good eats and destination dining, replacing the heavy portions of faux fabulousness that often quickly spoil with a timeless well-balanced mix of comfort, style and taste at his recently opened Michael's Genuine Food and Drink. "The whole intention was to open a place that I wanted to go to,"

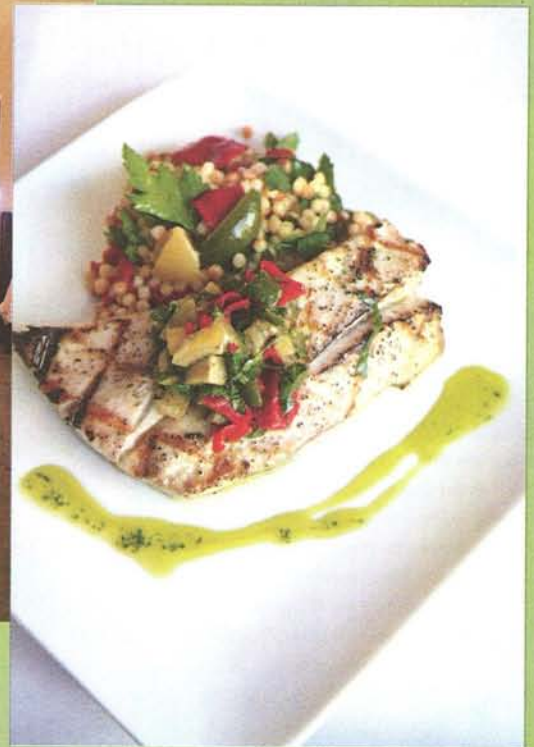
Schwartz explained. "I felt there was a lack of honest restaurants, and I thought it was time for a place where you could just go and the food was outstanding."

Outstanding indeed. Whether sipping a glass of organic chardonnay with a friend (make sure to stop by for their happy hour, Monday through Friday from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. for

The delicious Key lime tart with meringue is a sculptural ode to decadent desserts.



The crisp linear interior of the dining room, accented by a striking wall mosaic made of Guatemalan coins, is just simple enough to allow the cuisine to take center stage. The local grilled Cobia served with couscous is the perfect antidote for any fresh summer craving.



half-price drinks and \$4 snacks such as deviled eggs and chicken liver crostini – Schwartz admits it’s their best-kept secret), enjoying a relaxed meal with your spouse or celebrating a special occasion with out-of-town guests, this unpretentious bistro nestled in Miami’s burgeoning Design District is a genuine crowd pleaser. I know, I’ve done all three.

Using ingredients from local growers and small farmers whenever possible, the menu, divided into small, medium, large and extra-large plates, provides diners with a variety of options and portions to satisfy any appetite and budget – large and extra-large plates range from \$14 to \$39. And, thanks to Schwartz’s longstanding relationships with purveyors and winemakers (Jim Clendenen of California winery Au Bon Climat is a partner), the extensive wine selection, both by the bottle and by the glass, never fails to pair the perfect vintage with a delicious offering of, let’s say, slow-roasted Berkshire pork shoulder with Anson Mills cheese grits, pickled onion and parsley sauce or a grilled filet of local striped bass with Italian couscous, preserved meyer lemons, cerignola olives and roasted peppers. Genuinely hungry yet?

Also delightfully paired with the cuisine is a cozy 90-seat indoor/outdoor dining environment designed by the talented Carl Myers, whose past projects include Chispa, Little Palm Island and, of course, Nemo. Rich woods and natural materi-

als add warmth while an arresting wall mosaic constructed of Guatemalan coins adds dramatic pause to the spacious interior. But attention to aesthetics never overpowers Michael’s Genuine’s true focus ... the food. Perched behind a counter where a handful of lucky patrons can dine and relish in the aromas and antics of the open kitchen and wood-burning oven, Schwartz and his team engage guests in friendly conversation while turning out one culinary superstar after another.

“I set out to create a neighborhood place that feels like the real deal,” Schwartz admitted. “Where you are recognized and welcome, and there’s always something you want on the menu, and what goes into the dishes is simple, fresh and pure.”

The only presumption here is that every visit to Michael’s Genuine promises a delicious occasion. Whether you come in jeans and a T-shirt or a tailored suit, the abundant homemade fare, from pasta to rabbit terrine, is crafted to make you feel at home and that’s exactly the way Michael Schwartz wants it. ■

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