

JOURNAL AMERICA

A Momento In Time

visited with her husband and I just had to try it out for myself. She gave me the address and I set out on my journey.

I found myself driving down Morsetown Road, wondering where in the world I was. Then I saw the sign, Momento's. I made the turn and as I pulled down the lane, I couldn't believe my eyes. Here, nestled in the Highlands,



was an elegantly lit building, surrounded by pine trees, giving the picturesque setting a feeling of regality.

As I entered the building, a dapper gentleman named Alberto promptly greeted me. Turns out, Alberto Dautaj is the owner. Alberto is an intriguing man, who is not only an accomplished restaurant owner, but also an enchanting singer. His dream was to open a restaurant worthy of old world style Tuscan. I would say he succeeded.

As you walk into the dining area, to the right is the bar, where you will find a wide selection of spirits, including an exquisite selection of wines. To the left is a white baby grand piano serenading the patrons. And the aroma floating about the room was absolutely delectable.

Upon being seated, I looked around and noticed windows, extending from floor to ceiling, eloquently framing the back of the restaurant. Double doors lead to the outdoor dining patio, encircling a cherub water fountain, giving the feeling of serenity among the whispering pines. Momento's is certainly one of the more beautiful establishments I have been to. Stairs lead to the balcony, which

romance.

As I perused the menu, I noticed the unique selection of dishes Alberto has created, beginning with cold Antipasti such as Tre muscheteri, which is fresh buffalo mozzarella, sliced fresh tomatoes, roasted peppers and basil, Carpaccio which is thinly sliced filet mignon over arugula and shaved parmesan cheese, and a traditional Shrimp Cocktail. The Hot Antipasti includes Spiedini alla Romana which is bread and mozzarella, battered on egg and parmesan mixtures, light anchovy, capers, lemon wine, Clams Oreganata is stuffed baked clams in a lemon wine sauce, Mussels Picante is New Zealand mussels in a spicy pink sauce, Calamari Fritte fried calamari served hot or mild, and a Hot Antipasti for two which includes eggplant rollatini, baked clams, mussels, stuffed mushrooms, shrimp and spiedini.

For the Zuppe (soup) you can choose from Pasta e Fagiolo, Tortellini in Brodo, or the Zuppa del Giorno, their freshly made soup of the day. Insalate include the Zana Salad, the famous tre color salad, diced tomatoes, shaved gorgonzola cheese, in a light homemade vinaigrette, the Momento salad made with mixed baby greens and their famous homemade dressing (Alberto's mothers secret recipe which is used in a variety of ways from a salad topper, to a handsome and tasty compliment to any dish) and the traditional Caesar salad.

Momento's has a main dish for every palate, such as their Penne alla Momento which is penne pasta with fresh tomatoes, artichoke hearts, basil and melted mozzarella cheese,

and Fettuccini alla Scala which is diced red and white onions, eggplant, sun dried tomatoes and melted mozzarella cheese.

If you are in the mood for meat, try the Pollo Arta which is sun dried tomatoes, asparagus and mushrooms in a sherry wine sauce; or the Veal Momento topped with thinly sliced eggplant, mozzarella cheese, sliced tomatoes, in a Marsala wine sauce; or the Rack of Lamb, tender and baked to perfection in a Borofo wine demy glaze.

If fish is your passion, Momento's has a nice selection to choose from including the Salmon Dijonaise made with whole black pepper corns in a Dijon mustard cream sauce, or the Scallops Provincial, a union of sea scallops, plum tomatoes, garlic, basil and olive oil. There are many more tasty items on Momento's menu to choose from and all are freshly prepared to order. Momento's will be more than happy to accommodate any special request.

I decided to start with the Carpaccio which I found to be utterly fresh and delicious and I

ordered the Eggplant Momento as my main meal, which is rolled and stuffed with spinach and mozzarella cheese, black olives and a white wine sauce, an excellent choice. I complimented my delectable meal with a glass of white wine from Momento's considerable selection.

Mr. Alberto Dautaj is no novice to the restaurant business. He started with a restaurant in Italy, fueling his passion, and soon found himself in America becoming quite the restaurateur. Momento's originally opened in Teaneck, NJ in 1993 and moved to West Milford in 1996. Alberto is also proprietor to three other restaurants, the Zana D in Warwick, NJ, the Arta Trattoria in Ringwood, NJ, and Dautaj in Warwick, N.Y., (formerly the Warwick Inn).

Mr. Dautaj prides himself in his culinary creations, which arouses the palate and is elegantly presented. Momento's has the charm and grace of Old World Tuscan transporting you straight to Northern Italy.

The serene atmosphere allows you to forget about your busy life, if "only for one Momento". Alberto knows all his frequent patrons by name and greets everyone with a smile. This was truly a grand gourmet dining experience.

Momento's also provides catering for all occasions, large or small, both indoors and outdoor and will meet your individual catering needs. Momento's is open Tuesday through Friday for lunch and dinner from noon until 10:00pm, Saturday dinner from 4:00pm to 11:00pm and on Sunday for lunch and dinner from noon until 9:00pm. Live entertainment can be heard weekends. Reservations are required on weekends.

Momento's will be open for Easter and Mother's Day. Call now to reserve your table.



RESTAURANT CATERING
374 Morsetown Road • West Milford NJ
973-728-9613

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