

## DINING



Antipasto with burrata, English peas and house marinated olives.



Enchanted Springs local trout on fava beans, oyster mushrooms and asparagus were favorites alongside eggplant parmigiana.



Chocolate hazelnut truffles surround lemon panna cotta with intense flavored layers.



Bellina Alimentari specializes in homemade pastas also for takeout.

# Israeli-Born Chef Has Vision, Takes Risks

By Marcia Caller Jaffe

Is it a wine bar? Is it a gourmet market with incredible takeout? An upscale Italian restaurant? A hip Atlanta BeltLine destination? Well, yes, it is all of the above!

Entrepreneur and visionary, Tal Postelnik Baum knows her schiacciata from burrata, Sangiovese from Schiava at Bellina Alimentari, an authentic, health and locally conscious trigger of the senses. One of the first restaurants to open in Ponce City Market, Bellina bridges the crossroads of being a tourist destination and just plain destination because it is that unique. Here, the food is well-cared-for and cared about.

Recently, Bellina was recognized by the Museum of Design Atlanta. The restaurant's subtle coffee-flavored pasta with kale and mushroom was created to tie into the "Passione Italiana" MODA exhibit, which closed June 9.

For Baum, a culinary background began in childhood. She grew up in Haifa in a family that took pride in food and entertaining. "I was especially keen on preparing fabulous breakfasts," she recalled.

Newly married after serving in the Israel Defense Forces, she moved to Florence, Italy, with her medical student husband to explore new horizons and expand her expertise in Italian cuisine.

In addition to Bellina, Baum is calling on her Israeli roots with new restaurant Aziza, offering modern Israeli food, opening later this month, and Rina, serving Israeli street food, coming in the fall.

All to say that Baum has indeed "arrived" as the one to watch in our wildly expanding and eclectic dining scene flourishing on the Westside and along the BeltLine.



Tal Baum hails from Israel and is opening several new restaurants to add to Bellina Alimentari.

### What we went crazy over

For antipasto, we had the burrata, with English peas and pea shoots, which was a fine indicator of the treats to come.

The marinated artichoke was splendid firm stalks with fresh herbs and top-flight evoo. The marinated olives were also prepared in-house. The crudité platter alongside anchovy parmesan aioli would rival any rainbow. The carrots, radishes and cauliflower were crunchy and right off the farm. The aioli was on the bland side and could have had more anchovy to add some spice.

Enchanted Springs trout was bursting right out of a Georgia brook onto its platter of bright green fava beans, oyster mushrooms, asparagus and green garlic. As my mother would say, "very generous portions." So the ideal would be to share with the eggplant lasagna. Pomodoro, basil, mozzarella and parmigiano reggiano alternated with the eggplant ever so delicately stacked.

The cavolfiore "adult grilled cheese sandwich" was roasted cauliflower, sun-



The market side of the restaurant boasts gourmet Italian treats and provisions.

dried tomato, shallots, artisanal cheese grilled into schiacciata, Bellina's homemade bread made with potato water. This would also make a satisfying lunch.

The desserts were authentic "dolci," lemon panna cotta with layers of distinguishable intense flavors paired with chocolate hazelnut truffles. At this point, we weren't counting calories, but it's worth every single one.

### Delight in an orange vino

Our knowledgeable server suggested these pairings:

- Antipasti - Sangiovese LaSelva (Tuscany), dry Brioche classic sparkling, always refreshing.
- Primi - Trebbiano Le Ragnaie (Tuscany), unusual blend of nutty baked pair.
- Secondi - Castelfeder Schiava, Alto Adige 2107, light body, earthy.
- Dolci - Amaro Nonino, sweet and bitter balance, walnut.

And our winner is ... the Schiava because of its mouthwatering acidity and sunny orange hue. From really beautiful macerated orange/white varietals, the

server introduced it as "really well cared for; the sun, the stars and real hippy dippy."

There are more than 40 wines on the menu and crafted millennial cocktails with monikers such as "Oh, You Pretty Thing" and "Super Rocky Marciano."

### Classes at Bellina

You can also take cooking classes at Bellina, so check out their website calendar. Pizza, Pasta 101, and Gnocchi sell out quickly. A fun experience and memorable gift.

### Expansion

Baum will soon open Aziza, happiness in Arabic, in Westside Provisions District. "We will dip into modern Israeli food as a melting pot, with a focus on sharing. It will not be shawarma and hummus. Diners will experience exciting, complex, yet ethnic flavors, and leave feeling as if they've just been welcomed into someone's home in Israel."

There will be outdoor seating and a stand, "Falafel Nation," with to-go items, including hummus bowls, falafel, pitas and other vegetarian street food.

Baum plans to continue with a third restaurant this fall, named after her grandmother Rina. This Israeli street food concept will open along the Eastside BeltLine in the Ford Factory Lofts across from Ponce City Market.

"I take great pride in showcasing Israeli food [introducing] these new concepts onto the Atlanta dining scene; and literally, my mom is the greatest help to allow me to do it!

"An idea starts in my head and the dream spreads into reality," Baum said. "I am most proud of building a great team. Opening Bellina was the best business decision I have ever made." ■