



Culinary Corner

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REVIEW



Bobby Cochran/CW photos

Entrées at Santé such as this tender, mustard-glazed salmon are served with wild rice or potatoes and a mélange of melt-in-your-mouth vegetables.

À votre santé

A toast to French-inspired dining in Matthews

by Heidi Billotto
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Santé restaurant is 5 years old this month, but the building the restaurant calls home has been on Trade Street in downtown Matthews for decades. The building, a treasure listed in the National Historic Registry, has original brick walls, a red brick exterior and well-preserved tin ceilings. But the food at Santé is anything but dated. Instead it's an innovative blend of Old World French and new American cuisines featuring organic, locally grown produce and seasonal specialties. The feast of flavor at Santé is a direct result of the talent of chef and owner Adam Reed who, with his wife Veronica, came to North Carolina 10 years ago from New York City. At the time, the couple's only child, Erin, was a baby and the Reeds didn't want to raise a family in the city.

"We looked in upstate New York, out west and, to be honest, almost everywhere except the South," said Reed, explaining his dislike for hot weather. But then, an advertisement in the New York Times for a chef's position in Matthews caught their attention.

Reed came to interview in 1997 and promptly started work at Hidden Garden.

He worked his way up to the position of executive

chef and eventually bought the place. During a family dinner at home, the Reeds were toasting the purchase – "à votre santé" they said to each other, which is French for "to your health." They decided that the abbreviation for the toast – santé – should be the name for their new venture.

"For us, the name Santé brings it all together," said Reed. "It's about the celebration of food, family and friends – a toast to all that is good in life."

Seasonally special

Santé's menu is not long or complicated. A short list of flavorful appetizers, soups, salads and entrées are suited to the season. Soon to be gone are the excellent veal osso bucco and the slow-roasted duck breast with wild rice terrine, each giving way to lighter fare for spring. New entrées such as veal cutlets or chops, pork tenderloin, a fresh asparagus salad and desserts with locally grown berries will appear on the menu as the weather starts to warm.

Here to stay through warm weather months are starters such as the roasted onion tart with blue cheese crumbles, smoked bacon and herb-tomato sauce, a dish inspired by Reed's French heritage; and the innovative avocado egg roll served with roasted corn relish and cilantro aioli, an eclectic mix of flavors from the Southwest. Don't miss the French country salad with mixed greens, hearts of palm, artichoke hearts, olives, tomatoes, cucumber and a homemade, fresh herb vinaigrette or the arugula salad with shaved prosciutto, Parmesan and toasted pine nuts in a flavor-

SANTÉ

★★★★ out of 5

Location: 165 N. Trade St., Matthews

Phone: 704-845-1899

Price range: Lunch, \$7.95-\$10.95; dinner entrées, \$15.95-\$29.95.

Hours: Lunch served Tuesday-Friday, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.; dinner served Tuesday-Thursday, 5-9 p.m., and Friday and Saturday, 5-10 p.m.

Details: Year-round patio dining; reservations accepted; children's menu; vegetarian specialties; on- and off-premise catering.

For more information: Visit www.santeof-matthews.com.

ful homemade raspberry vinaigrette.

For entrées look to the pan-seared free-range chicken, the honey- and- mustard-glazed salmon, and the crusted rack of lamb. The three, like other menu entrées and nightly specials, come with sides of a variety of potatoes or rice and a daily selection of roasted vegetables.

For those who don't eat meat, Santé offers a nightly vegetarian plate of roasted vegetables, starches and greens. Santé also offers a children's menu suited to please younger palates.

Desserts are made in-house and vary from season to season. The chocolate lava cake is a delicious mainstay and a wonderful way to finish an evening at Santé.



Lamb lovers have no better choice of entrée at Santé than Reed's succulent, encrusted rack of lamb.

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From market to table

In spring and summer, Reed takes advantage of the bountiful harvest offered across the street at the Saturday morning farmers' market.

With more than 40 sellers, the Matthews Community Farmers' Market is the largest growers-only farmers' market in the greater Charlotte area, and everything sold there is farmed within 50 miles. The market opens this year on April 14. Reed often joins other Charlotte chefs who conduct free early-morning cooking seminars at the market every Saturday beginning at 8:30. Reed will be there cooking in July at the market's annual tomato festival. For more information, visit www.matthewsfarmersmarket.com.

Passing on the passion

Reed's formal education is in business management, but his passion has always been in the kitchen. He learned from his grandmother and follows in the footsteps of his great grandfather, grandfather and uncle who were all talented chefs.

After a stab at a career in accounting, which he admits he hated, Reed decided to give it a go in the kitchen. Through

family connections he landed a choice position in the kitchen of Rene Pujol, a romantic little French restaurant in midtown New York.

"When I first came to Matthews, I was working for someone else, so all of the culinary decisions were not mine to make. But since we've owned the place, I think I've really tried to define my own style," Reed said. "I knew a classical French restaurant probably wouldn't fly here, so I used French technique and created my own style of eclectic American cuisine."

In addition to sharing cooking tips with Saturday morning market shoppers, Reed shares his talents with others in his kitchen, well aware that when chefs leave Santé to work in other dining establishments, the way they cook is a reflection of their experience with him.

One former line chef now living on the North Carolina coast was recently named best new chef in Wilmington. Another is owner of the popular Stone Table Café in Monroe. "It's a hidden jewel," noted Reed in admiration.

"I learned from several generous chefs and now it's my turn to show someone else, to give back," Reed explained. □



For dessert, try a classic French offering: ice cream-stuffed profiteroles.

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What's cookin'

edited by **Heidi Billotto**
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Winners in Best Teen Chef local competition are, from left, Noel Sosa of Greensboro, third place; Karsen Brassard of Prairie Village, Kan., first place; Ken Aponte of Charlotte, second place.

 **Karsen Brassard, an 18-year-old senior from Prairie Village, Kan., won first place Saturday, March 18, at the Art Institute of Charlotte's fifth annual regional cook-off. She also won a \$3,000 scholarship to attend The Art Institute of Charlotte. Karsen will compete May 5 for the national title of The Art Institutes' Best Teen Chef 2007 and a full scholarship to attend AiCH. Ken Aponte, a senior at East Mecklenburg High School, won second-place and a \$2,000 scholarship; Noel Sosa of Greensboro won third place and a \$1,000 scholarship.**

 **Harper's Restaurant has opened at Carolina Place Mall in Pineville. Located beside Barnes & Noble Bookstore and REI, the restaurant offers casual dining and a diverse American menu. The large lounge area features an extensive wine list, wine-by-the-glass selections, beer on tap and freshly squeezed juices for specialty drinks. The rustic brick interior of the new Harper's was preserved from the old**

Charlotte Trolley Barn. Two outdoor patios give guests a chance to dine al fresco. Private dining rooms accommodate groups of up to 50. To make reservations at the smoke-free establishment, call 704-541-5255. For information, visit harpersrestaurants.com.

 **Fruit Ripples, a new General Mills low-fat snack food made from dried apples, is partnering with Target's portrait studio to offer the "Apple of My Eye Sweepstakes," which will award a grand-prize winner a trip for four to New York City, a family portrait collection from The Studio at Target, \$500 in cash and a year's supply of Fruit Ripples snacks. In addition, samples of Fruit Ripples will be given to visitors to The Studio at Target until May 31, while supplies last. Adults 18 years or older can enter the sweepstakes by visiting www.fruitripplessweepstakes.com by May 31. Once the registration form is complete, entrants also will receive a coupon for a free sitting and a free 8-by-10-inch print at The Studio at Target. Ten first-prize winners also will be chosen to receive a custom portrait collection and 10 boxes of Fruit Ripples. All prizes will be chosen through a random sweepstakes drawing.**

 **As part of the company's annual Food Fight 2007 campaign, associates from Charlotte-based Compass Group, The Americas Division, collected more than 49,000 pounds of food for Loaves & Fishes, a local agency that distributes food to those in need. Items collected included 13,211 cans of 12-oz. canned fruit; 13,392 cases of macaroni and cheese; 15,675 cans of tuna, 11,576 boxes of muffin mix, and 933 boxes of much-needed diapers. The donation was the largest in Loaves & Fishes' history. □**

