

## Revolution, for the masses: 'Everyday fine dining for everyone'

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DURHAM -- Downtown's newest addition to the food scene, the restaurant Revolution, has barely been open more than a week.

But already there are repeat and loyal customers and a solid buzz of excitement surrounding the establishment offering "international, contemporary cuisine." That's a sign that despite a three-months-long delay in renovations and an opening date right in the midst of the most challenging holiday season in years, Revolution is in a good position to survive and flourish into the future.

Opened Dec. 23 by chef and proprietor Jim Anile, a 14-year veteran of the dining and hospitality industries who was previously the executive chef of Il Palio at the Siena Hotel, Revolution's "fine dining for everyone" concept can be seen in both its décor and menu.

"We try to do it like we have 20 other restaurants like this on the block," Anile said. "It's about thinking about what we can do to bring out the best and not have to charge what everyone thinks is fine dining."

Anile's wife, Teresa, summed up the restaurant's concept as "Everyday fine dining for everyone."

Revolution is located in Greenfire Development's Baldwin Building at 107 W. Main St., which formerly housed a department store and one of French artist Georges Rousse's installations in 2006. The Aniles have updated the look and feel by using steel and concrete materials on top of the worn original hardwood floors.

The restaurant occupies 3,900 square feet and has 130 seats: 45 at the bar, 45 in the dining area and 40 more seats in private dining.

White tablecloths, ambient lighting, sleek modern furniture in white and coffee tones certainly add up to a sense of the upscale.

However, a peek at the menu quickly reveals that although the restaurant is upscale in service, food and décor, the pricing runs the gamut from budget-friendly to sumptuous.

Of the 33 menu items, for instance, only eight are \$20 and above. The menu is also grouped by portion size: small, which are \$10 or less, or big, ranging from \$16 for Lacquered Chicken with Moroccan cous cous to Seared Diver Scallops with sweet pea puree and oven roasted porcini for \$21.

For diners craving more opulence, the menu offers chef's selection tastings and dishes under the "Second Mortgage" heading, including Dry Aged Kobe New York steak with truffle butter and scalloped potatoes, \$39, or Bouillabaisse, \$40.

The menu also changes slightly every night, with the staff often scrambling to print 20-30 copies before opening for dinner. The restaurant could save on ingredients by watching what's seasonal and what's local, Anile said.

Anile added that it's a safe bet half of the menu items will stay put from day to day, but as seasonal fare comes in, and especially in the first few months as the restaurant settles into a routine, regulars will continue to see changes. On Friday, for example, Revolution served up suckling pig with braised cabbage, an item not on the "original" menu.

The concept is also carried out in the wine list, which features 50 fine wines from small-production vineyards all priced at less than \$50.

The goal is to be an "every occasion" restaurant, Anile said. By having equal numbers of seats at the bar and the main dining room, Anile effectively welcomes fans of fine dining as well as revelers getting ready for a night out on the town at the Durham Performing Arts Center who might want to just stop in for some wine and a quick bite.

Anile declined to disclose the total cost of opening the restaurant, but emitted a relieved and exhausted sigh at the remodeling of the 80-year-old space, which had delayed the restaurant's original opening date of late September. Jim and Teresa Anile own most of the business themselves.

When asked about how the restaurant plans to survive a recession, which many believe will not lift until the second half of the year, Jim Anile replied that consumers don't necessarily cut out Friday and Saturday nights.

"I think that people still want to go out and have a good time. We provide a reasonable option for that," he said.

"We have a lot of great restaurants in Durham. What's going to make us last?" Anile added. "It doesn't have to be expensive. We just have to push it, work a little harder, to make it happen."

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