

CREATIVE LOAFING

**HOLIDAY
MOVIE
PREVIEW**



**11 FILMS
TO SEE
THIS
SEASON**

**BY CURT
HOLMAN**

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FOOD
FIRST LOOK

**AT
BREZZA**



**BELLINA
ALIMENTARI**

PLUS

STAR WARS:

T H E F A N S A W A K E N

HOW THE SCI-FI FRANCHISE PUTS GRASSROOTS CREATIVITY INTO HYPERDRIVE



Italian stallions

How Ponce City Market's Bellina Alimentari and Brezza Cucina measure up

BY ANGELA HANSBERGER



GENERAL STORE: Inside Bellina Alimentari

Bellina Alimentari

Roughly translated from Italian as “lovely specialty store,” Bellina Alimentari fits its moniker. Inside the handsome space is decorated with neutral tones and inviting marble countertops. There are glistening cases of fresh pastas, meats, and cheeses. A library of imported Italian ingredients forms the boundary to the right and small café tables fill the wooden floors. In the rear is a 14-seat full-service bar with comfy stools.

Restaurateur/architect Tal Postelnik Baum brought on executive chef David Berry (formerly of Horseradish Grill), who pulls from his Southern roots to cook Italian cuisine. The menu is an assortment of meat and cheeses, primi, secondi, and panini. Antipasti (3 for \$12) is a great way to kick off a meal with, perhaps, the marinated artichokes accented with lemon and swimming in olive oil.

Pasta servings are sizable and prepared with both made in-house noodles and dried Italian varieties. Tagliolini Della Sorellina (\$14) comes piping hot (really hot) with eggy pasta ribbons enrobed in a creamy mushroom ragu with meaty portions of seasonal earthy mushrooms.

There are six panini options (\$12-\$13), including a vegetarian version, Funghi (\$12), made with mushrooms and a luscious chestnut spread. Porchetta (\$12) made with Riverview Farms pork comes on house-made crusty Pane Toscano (think of a Tuscan version of focaccia) with salsa verde.

Secondi houses a group of comfort dishes that are suited to the upcoming winter months. Fran-

cesina (\$16), a traditional meat and onion stew, is made with hunks of tender marinated Brasstown beef served over creamy Anson Mills polenta. Polpette Al Sugo (\$12), meatballs stuffed with cheese in a bowl of rich and tangy tomato sauce, comes with crunchy bread for sopping.

Wine may be ordered by the half-glass, glass, or bottle from Bellina's lengthy list of Italian varietals. There is a nice selection of quirky orange wines — white wines produced with the body and tannins of a red and the fruit/minerality of a white. There is also an array of grappas to complete the Italian experience. Beer choices fit the theme, too, with local or Italian beers as options. Cocktails (\$9-\$12), conceived by Eric Simpkins of the Lawrence, are solid, many with bitter amaro notes. Negronis (\$7) flow on tap.

Bellina Alimentari is a new spot in which to eat salamis as if at a café in Milan or to take tourists for a taste of products from the South. It's more meat, cheese, and pasta than neighbor Brezza, which focuses on seafood, wood-fired pizzas, and greens. A meal at Bellina can be grab-and-go quick (if you are lucky enough to score a table) in the first-come-first-served area or coursed out in the bar area. And you can recreate the experience at home by shopping from the meticulously sourced Italian larder. [📍](#)

▶ 675 Ponce de Leon Ave. N.E., Suite N-131,
404-350-9933. bellina-alimentari.com.

FOODANDDRINK@CREATIVELOAFING.COM

