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Lake Country Reporter

Owners blend art and science at Hispania restaurant in Delafield



A theme night showcasing Argentina's food, drink and music brought couples to the dance floor at Hispania in Delafield. The family business will mark its second anniversary in June. Photo By Submitted photo

By Sheila Nero Lakeneews@Jcpgroup.Com

April 13, 2015

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The owners of Hispania want to redefine Hispanic cuisine for their customers and offer an authentic celebration of cultures. Natalia Aramoni, Hispania's chef, and her husband, Juan Gutierrez, combine talents at their upscale restaurant.

The family business, which focuses on fresh, authentic food, will mark its second anniversary in June.

"My wife followed me for 20 years in my corporate career, now I'm following her," Gutierrez said.

Aramoni, a former architect of commercial and industrial buildings, accompanied Gutierrez, a former GE engineer, through his career assignments.

They lived in Texas, Pennsylvania and New York, among other states, and Gutierrez traveled frequently. "Hispania is her project, her dream," he said. Both were born in Mexico.

"I love to cook and create and to taste different cuisines," Aramoni said. "At Hispania, we don't want to just show the food. We want to show the culture."

This "showcase" approach prompted monthly themed dinners. The fixed menu highlights the food and drink of Spain, Peru, Uruguay, Chile, Argentina and others, one at a time. During the dinners, which include entertainment such as flamenco dancers, the restaurant is closed to the public.

The menu

"My cooking includes fusion within Hispanic cuisines and also outside Hispanic cuisines," Aramoni said. Fusion dishes include Robala al cilantro, wild-caught Chilean sea bass with cilantro pesto, Mexican zucchini and rice.

"We are fighting the stereotype of Mexican food being greasy or of poor quality," Gutierrez said. "Customers tell us 'we can't believe this is a Mexican restaurant.' That's because they haven't been exposed to upscale Mexican food."

The stocked bar offers plentiful tequilas plus margaritas, sangria and mojitos and a full wine list. Hispania's coffee, served and also sold in-house, is grown on the farm of Gutierrez's father in Chiapas, Mexico.

The background

The owners spent a year putting their business plan and recipes on paper before opening. True to his professional roots, Gutierrez said, "It's a highly engineered restaurant. This is a little factory; inventory is under control. It's a challenging project, but it's not impossible. We use what we've learned in other fields."

The couple has three children: Diego, 10, Natalia, 12, and Juan Pablo, 15.

"The restaurant is our fourth kid," Gutierrez said.

The tables

In warm weather, redwood tables sit outside on a brick surface. Inside, custom woven napkins accent white tablecloths.

Recently, a "girls day out" birthday celebration was toasted with a bottle of wine near the front windows. Couples and families sat at tables near a row of vibrant art prints on the main wall. The contemporary bar is partitioned from the dining room with shelves displaying folk art, which is for sale.

Music is offered on Saturdays, varying from classical guitar to merengue and salsa beats.

Restaurant Scout profiles Lake Country restaurants to describe ambience, cuisine, price range and clientele. This is a destination feature rather than a food review. Send questions or comments to restaurantscout@gmail.com.

Good to know

Address: 601 Genesee St., Delafield

Phone: (262) 228-8940

Website: www.lahispania.com

Fare: Hispanic fusion

Reservations: Recommended

Prices: At lunch, tableside guacamole is \$7.50 for a half-order, and dishes range up to \$14. Dinner ranges from Fajitas de Pollo for \$18 and Filete en Cuillacoche for \$28 to Paella para dos for \$40. Sunday brunch is \$13. Theme nights cost \$55-\$75 per person.

Hours

Lunch: 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday-Saturday

Brunch: 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday

Dinner: 4:30-9 p.m. Monday-Thursday; 4:30-10 p.m. Friday-Saturday

Wheelchair access: Yes

Gluten-free options: Yes

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Weekend Happenings

Featured this week:

Family Movie Night: 6 p.m. April 25, Blessed Teresa of Calcutta Parish Center, W314 N7462 Highway 83, North Lake. The movie "Bambi" will start at 6 p.m. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Free hot dogs and snacks. Children must be accompanied by a parent. Come in comfy clothes and bring a blanket to relax with. RSVP to the parish office at (262) 966-2191 or at www.blteresaparish.org

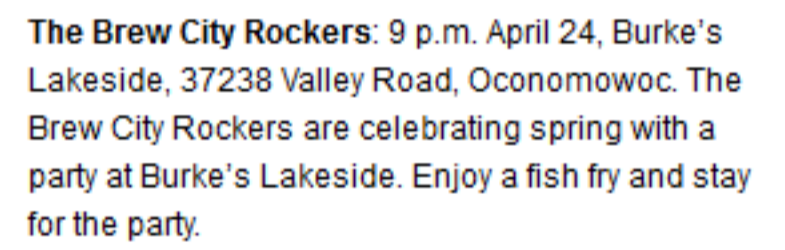
Poetry Open Mic Night: 7 p.m. April 25, Books & Company, 1039 Summit Ave., Oconomowoc. Celebrate Poetry Month with an evening a poetry. Read your own or a favorite poet, or enjoy listening to others. Free.

The Brew City Rockers: 9 p.m. April 24, Burke's Lakeside, 37238 Valley Road, Oconomowoc. The Brew City Rockers are celebrating spring with a party at Burke's Lakeside. Enjoy a fish fry and stay for the party.

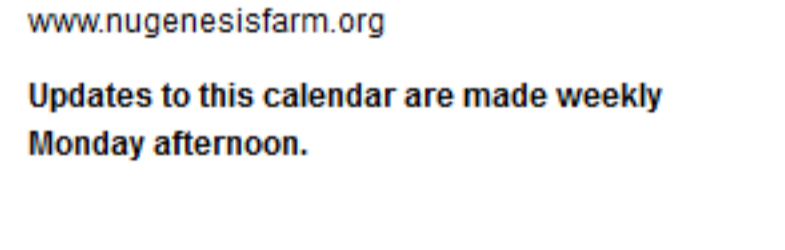
Grow Your Own Salad Gardening Class: 10 a.m. April 25, NuGenesis Farm, N68 W33208 County Road K, Oconomowoc. Join the NuGenesis staff to learn to grow your own delicious and healthy salads at home. \$30 recommended donation. www.nugenesisfarm.org

Updates to this calendar are made weekly Monday afternoon.

All weekend happenings.



SAVINGS END SATURDAY



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