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SMART IDEAS FOR HEALTHY, BALANCED LIVING

PREMIERE ISSUE

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JUST FOR
BERGEN
COUNTY

WINTER 2007

Eating Smart

BEST RESTAURANTS

a taste of bergen county

From chipotle cheddar-crusted shrimp to Tuscan white bean ravioli to napoleon of caramelized bananas (is your mouth watering yet?), here is a sampling of Bergen County's tastiest restaurants. And whether you're looking for locally grown classics, foreign flare, or the perfect place to toast a friend, we've got something just for you.

—By Christina Cha



Chakra

AXIA TAVERNA

18 Piermont Rd.
Tenafly, NJ 07670
(201) 569-5999
axiataverna.com

PRICE: \$5-\$12 app, \$17-\$26 entrées
Axia, from the Greek *axios*, means "worthy," and the owner of Axia Taverna has created a restaurant worthy of our attention. The notable design includes a fireplace hearth, prominently displayed and temperature-controlled wine racks, and a chic outdoor patio. The menu consists of small and large plates such as ouzo steamed mussels with tomato garlic broth and a selection of charcoal-grilled meats and fish, served with souvlaki garnish.

AZUCAR CUBAN CUISINE & CIGARS

495 Washington Blvd.
Jersey City, NJ 07310
(201) 222-0090
azucarcubancuisine.com

PRICE: \$5-\$12 app, \$14-\$26 entrées

Azucar is best known for its cigar-friendly atmosphere, delicious mojitos, and heaping portions of Cuban home cooking. Start out with chicharrón de pollo or ceviche and then order the "El Grande," a sirloin steak pounded thin, breaded, and deep-fried. The restaurant also offers daily specials, live music, happy hour, homemade desserts and, of course, hand-rolled cigars that you can enjoy in the cigar lounge.

CAFÉ MATISSE

167 Park Ave.
Rutherford, NJ 07070
(201) 935-2995
cafematisse.com

PRICE: prix fixe only (\$60 for 3 courses, \$75 for 4 courses, \$95 for 5 courses)

Inspired by Henri Matisse, the critically acclaimed Café Matisse offers an eclectic American and European grazing menu, which changes often. Look for dishes such as the

smoked swordfish loin with Tuscan white bean ravioli, chorizo, and cilantro broth or the panko-crusted crab cake with chipotle Cheddar-crusted shrimp. Enjoy the warm, art-filled dining room or dine outdoors in the garden.

CHAKRA

W. 144 Hwy. 4 E.
Paramus, NJ 07652
(201) 556-1530
chakrarestaurant.com

PRICE: \$7-\$19 app, \$16-\$42 entrées

Chakra's name is influenced by the ancient yoga systems of India, and the restaurant's decor reflects this as well, from the teak floors and tables to the Cambodian reliefs and silk-tented bungalows. The menu consists of fresh, local ingredients, including hand-picked greens, free-range poultry, artisanal breads, and certified Black Angus beef. Executive Chef Edward Lake also creates original house-made pastries, such as the bittersweet chocolate goat cheesecake and the napoleon of caramelized bananas with coconut gelato and chocolate sauce.

VARKA ESTIATORIO

30 N. Spruce St.
Ramsey, NJ 07446
(201) 995-9333
varkarestaurant.com

PRICE: \$8-\$17 app, \$18-\$44 entrées

Varka is Greek for "boat" and the name emphasizes that diners can expect their food delivered virtually fresh from the sea. Varka specializes in seasonal whole-fish dishes, such as loup de mer and royal dorado, served by the pound and accompanied by a daily selection of vegetables. The contemporary Mediterranean menu also includes items such as crispy pan-fried or grilled calamari, steamed mussels with ouzo herb broth, and charcoal-broiled meats.

SADDLE RIVER INN

2 Barnstable Court
Saddle River, NJ 07458
(201) 825-4016
saddleriverinn.com

PRICE: \$8-\$12 app, \$29-\$36 entrées
Housed in a 150-year-old barn, Saddle River Inn has been

servicing French-inspired New American fare in its romantic country setting since 1981. Enjoy daily and seasonal specials such as sesame-crusted shrimp with a curry dipping sauce and pineapple confit or the filet of beef "Maribar" with chestnut purée, béarnaise, port-wine sauce, and potato gratin. Also recommended is the Châteaubriand for two, which is served with shiitake and oyster mushrooms, red-wine jus and roesti potato.

Fine Dining at Home

Rather eat in than dine out, but don't have the time or energy to prepare a tasty, wholesome meal? Meal-assembly kitchens will help you put together several dinners that you simply store in your freezer until you're ready to heat them up and put them on your table. Personal chef services will deliver to your door any number of meals that you likewise store in the fridge or freezer. See our story "A Moveable Feast" on page 32 for more info and then check out the following listing of services near you.

MEAL-ASSEMBLY KITCHEN MealMAKERS

10 Franklin Turnpike, Center Ct
Plaza
Waldwick, NJ 07463
(201) 670-6325
mealmakers.com

Services: Meal assembly, or you can pick up assembled meals for an additional fee.

PERSONAL CHEF SERVICES Tableside

(201) 803-2971
personalchef@optonline.net

Traveling Gourmet

Vickie Kirlick
(201) 666-9800
prslchefdiva@hotmail.com

AMAZING MEALS
IN MINUTES

WINTER GETAWAYS
YOU'LL LOVE

BERGEN COUNTY'S BEST
RESTAURANTS (p. 34)