

THIS WEEK

Staying Put in Reno

Part Two

by John Mariani

Everyone Has a Julia Child Moment

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NEW YORK CORNER

Moti Mahal

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That's a nostalgic 1950 postcard above of Reno's Virginia Street, at a time when its principal draw was its casinos, where the restaurants served up an amalgam of American and continental food at prices low enough to keep people fueled up and ready to gamble the night away. But as in Las Vegas and Atlantic City, Reno is making strides to become a destination for all manner on non-casino activities, and that includes some excellent restaurants, both large and small, attracting locals and visitors alike for their variety and quality, from sushi bars and Thai restaurants to grand Italian places and steakhouses.



At Campo, owner-chef Mark Estee and chef de cuisine Arturo Moscoso have given Reno its first, unmistakably modern Italian restaurant, from *antipasti* to *zuppa*, and done it with enormous brio, from first-rate pizzas that are impeccably charred and blistered to housemade charcuterie and freshly made pastas. Not only has Campo energized the local dining community but it is starting to get noticed throughout the West for its

formula of true hospitality, sumptuous food, and moderate prices, all within a big, open atmosphere of good times. Plan to eat a lot and share everything.

Of course, as in so many Italian restaurants, the appetizers and pastas are the show-off dishes, and the charcuterie (*below*) at Campo is outstanding, as are the peppers *al forno* with a lemon-lime sea salt, the white polenta with roasted mushrooms and egg, and, most of all, the crispy pork plate lavished with ear-and-jowl skin that crunches when you bite into it like tortilla chips. The pizzas come from a custom-built oven that makes them textbook perfect in texture, and the quick cooking guarantees they are very hot and the dough just starting to subside under the toppings.



The housemade pastas are difficult to choose among—*tagliatelle* with wild boar bolognese *ragù* and aged pecorino cheese; risotto with roasted pork, zucchini, spring onion, and *chicharones*; and potato gnocchi with truffled-mascarpone and *grana padano* cream sauce. And if you have room, by all means order the roasted baby pig, *porchetta*, with purple mashed potatoes or the stuffed pig's trotter called *zampone* (Campo goes through several whole Niman Ranch pigs per week).

Desserts are good--creamy *budino* and cheesecake--and the wine list is highly admirable for having so many well-chosen bottlings under \$50.

Campo is a major player in town, and I wouldn't be surprised to see Estee branch it out to Lake Tahoe. That city could use it.

Dinner starters \$4-\$11, pizzas \$12-\$15, pastas (half portions available) \$22-\$28, main courses \$13-\$50.