

2 new eateries coming to Mercato

Zoes & Soul Bowl

Two new fast-casual eateries coming soon to Mercato in North Naples promise fresh, healthier fare at reasonable prices.

[Zoës Kitchen](#) tentatively plans to open this week in the space vacated at the end of December by Taps Restaurant, Bar & Lounge. Soul Bowls launches this month in the unit formerly occupied by 345 Caffé Italiano.

Zoës' made-from-scratch Mediterranean-inspired dishes focus on grilling as well as an abundance of fresh fruits and vegetables, fresh herbs, olive oil and lean proteins.

Still awaiting its final inspection and certificate of occupancy, the second regional location for the growing chain will tentatively open as early as Saturday in the mixed-use development off U.S. 41 North and Vanderbilt Beach Drive. Its first location in Southwest Florida launched in June across U.S. 41 from Coconut Point in Estero.

The Naples menu for lunch and dinner will be the same items and prices as the one in Estero, General Manager Ruben Holguin said.

"We offer healthier options. There are no fryers or microwaves on the premises," Holguin said. "I think we are going to do amazing for lunchtime."

Zoës' menu features chicken, salmon, shrimp, steak and veggie kabobs (\$8.39 to \$11.89). Other entrees (\$7.79 to \$9.39) include Mediterranean grilled chicken, orzo pasta with chicken and tomato sauce, and chicken, spinach and shrimp roll-ups. All entrees and sandwiches come with a side.

Sandwich selections (\$7.39 to \$8.39) include chicken salad, pimento cheese, turkey and steak stacks, Italian flatbreads and a Gruben — a sandwich with grilled turkey, Swiss cheese, slaw and spicy mustard on rye.

New entrée bowls (\$8.59) come in three varieties: cauliflower rice, power grain and Mediterranean salad trio. Each features house-made tzatziki, cucumbers and fresh dill. A protein — chicken, lamb kafta or harissa salmon — can be added for an additional cost.

Starters and sides include hummus varieties, pita chips, rice pilaf, roasted vegetables and fresh fruit, as well as Greek, tabouli and quinoa salads. Mediterranean lamb kafta (\$5.99), a new appetizer, features three lamb and beef meatballs served over house-made tzatziki and cucumbers topped with Moroccan harissa and fresh dill.

House-baked desserts include a slice of chocolate cake (\$2.59) or chocolate chip or zesty lemon cookies (\$2.39). Beer and wine also are available.

Zoës Kitchen, of course, offers gluten-free, vegetarian and vegan options. For diners keeping count, calories for each item are listed on the menu.

Zoës has family meals that serve three to five or four to six people, as well as box lunches, party trays, and pint or quart servings to go. It also has catering options as well as takeout orders called in or placed online.

To celebrate its opening, Zoës Kitchen is giving away free sports cups and will offer free refills in these cups for the first month it is open. The first 500 people to sign up on social media will be emailed an offer for buy-one-get-one-free entrées, and the person who refers the most friends to enter through his or her post will be awarded Zoës food for a year, according to a news release.

Born in the Mediterranean and raised in the South, Zoës Kitchen is an extension of Zoë Cassimus' lifetime of cooking inspired by family recipes made from scratch. Founded in 1995 in Birmingham, Zoës is now headquartered in Plano, Texas, and has more than 215 locations in 20 states, according to zoeskitchen.com.

Zoës has completely remodeled Taps' former 3,215-square-foot space in Mercato. The restaurant shares a building with Cavo Lounge near The Second Cup coffee shop and offers dine-in lunch and dinner with seating inside or outside under a covered porch. Meals are ordered at a counter and served tableside to diners.

The new Zoës Kitchen, 9108 Strada Place, suite 14110, is open daily 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. For more information call 239-207-3894 or go to zoeskitchen.com.

Soul Bowls

Another new local eatery targeted to open Nov. 13 is promoted as a “super food cafe.”

[Soul Bowls](#), renovating a space across the street from The Counter burger bar and Mercato's piazza, will create exotic fruit bowls such as acai, pitaya, kale and coconut, as well as bowls featuring oatmeal, chia pudding and yogurt. Beverages will include cold brew and nitro coffees, kombucha teas, smoothies and cold-pressed juices.

“Our clientele is basically fitness and nutrition enthusiasts, millennial moms and teenagers. Bowls are one of the top five food trends listed by Forbes, so we're excited,” said Cindy Damon, who co-owns Soul Bowls with fiancé Scott Riddle and friend Marty Kenney.

Damon relocated here six years ago from New York and New Jersey, where bowls have been popular for years.

“This bowl trend is just incredible up there. They are really popular too in California and Hawaii,” Damon said. “I told them, let's bring this down to Naples. We all just kind of hopped on board.”

Although it's the first restaurant for Damon and Riddle, Kenney co-operates Joey D's Italian Restaurant. Kenney and Riddle went to high school together and have known each other for 25 years.

Damon, though, originally linked the trio to bowls, which were part of her lifestyle. For five years she was a personal assistant to Panache Desai, an internationally known spiritual thought leader and author often seen on “Oprah.”

“I learned so much about health food and organic produce and foods,” Damon said.

The key difference in Soul Bowls' product will be in the preparation process for the organic and local ingredients, Damon said.

"We're handcrafting all of our bowls and we are blending right in front of you," she said.

For instance, acai bowls start with a base blend — acai and banana with almond or coconut milk or an organic juice — that can be topped with granola and all-organic or local fruit such as strawberries, blueberries, kiwi and goji berries. Each category of bowls will have five topping options.

The nutritious bowls can be a meal, especially for lunch or breakfast, but also could also be a healthy snack or after-dinner dessert.

"It kind of looks like ice cream and almost tastes like ice cream, but you can feel good about it," Damon said.

The team has been renovating the restaurant space, a 1,848-square-foot unit that has been empty for two years but already was built out with walk-in coolers. It has space for 40 seats, which includes four tables in the adjacent breezeway and a few umbrella tables out front.

Soul Bowls also has the opportunity to offer call-ahead bowls. Orders can be placed online and diners can pull up in back to pick up the items.

"It was just kind of awesome that we really stepped into it," Damon said.

Similar to Burntwood Tavern across the street in Mercato, all of the wood they are using in the store is from an old barn in Ohio.

"We had it taken down and shipped here. We knew we wanted this old rustic look," Damon said. "It's really a rustic look and feel."

Perhaps more important than the cafe's appearance is its overall atmosphere, which its creators want to be dynamic. The cuisine and décor will be complemented by communal tables and free Wi-Fi.

"We want the vibe to have a lot of energy and a really spirited staff," Damon said. "I think Naples is really lacking a place like that."

Soul Bowls, 9115 Strada Place, suite 5126, will be open daily 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. For more information, call 239-571-6364 or go to soulbowlsnaples.com.