



STEALING THE SCENE

NORTHVILLE'S NOMI MIXES IT UP ALL UNDER ONE ROOF

Who hasn't dreamed of opening a restaurant? The kind of place where you can blend your own favorite dishes, create a comfortable-yet-stylish atmosphere and offer entertainment courtesy of your favorite musicians. The team at Northville's NOMI is living that dream from their chic, new eatery right on Main Street.


Just a block away from co-owner Al Irish's home, NOMI – named for the first two letters in Northville and Michigan – provides a dose of edgy eclecticism for those demanding a hip, urban dining experience in downtown Northville. Along with friend Rachel Stern and executive chef Jason Jones, Irish has developed a small plates concept that is fast becoming a local favorite.

"People in Michigan like the small plates concept but don't always like dining à la carte," Jones explains. "So with our menu, even though it is a small plate entree, there's always a side to fill it out." Jones has paid dues at Metro Detroit establishments such as Diamond Jim Brady's in Novi and at The Whitney in Detroit. Drawing on the best of the fine-dining concepts he's learned along the way, the menu meshes a few of his favorites with an infusion of everyday luxury.

NOMI's menu careens from Asia to the Middle East and back home again through a selection of New-American fusion standards and surprises. Dinner features a number of strong seafood choices with a twist, like the etouffée served with whole crawfish or the Szechuan tuna, presented with a tangy ginger hazelnut rice. The Asian steak au poivre is much-requested and showcased in a hoisin and green-pepper demi-glace. Salads at NOMI also eat like a meal. The warm steak salad comes as a hearty helping of well-seasoned beef surrounding a bed of mixed greens in a bold horseradish Dijon dressing.



While the lunch and dinner dishes are sure to make your shortlist, NOMI also astounds with its cocktail selection. British mixologist Rico Miller has created a quirky list rarely seen in these parts. Think "right-now" liquors and flavors like Cachaça (Brazilian rum) and elderflower. His passion for the freshest additions shines through the 25 choices, from the freshly pressed ginger and lemongrass featured in dish, the "Tiger Lily", to the just-picked mint mottled with passionfruit in the "Cuban Candy." NOMI is also growing its wine list, which is currently stocked with classic champagnes, reds and whites, is immediately on display when you enter from Main Street.

That one-of-a-kind attitude and desire to differ also shines though in NOMI's décor. The design is spare and modern in a color scheme of cinnabar and black. Cushy, back-lit booths stud the perimeter of the restaurant while black beaded chandeliers add a goth sensibility. The center of the restaurant features the bar, a stunning rectangle of underlit white onyx, providing the perfect backdrop for the live jazz and R&B combos on the weekends after 10 p.m. (A recent night featured Grammy-nominated jazz group Straight Ahead). So let NOMI be more than the restaurant of its owners' dreams. Make it also part of yours.  - Toni Martin