

Anthony's Out to Lunch

VENTURA'S OFFSHORE CAFÉ



By Anthony Previti

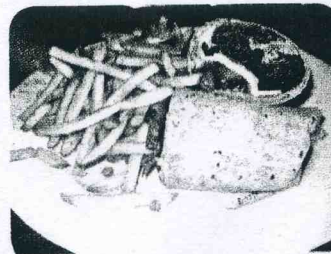
vessel of piping hot mussels came delivered to the table with a bowl on top for the shells. We uncovered them and the aroma of garlic, basil, and white wine filled the room. I lost count, but there must have been over 50 of them in there. The basic procedure is to shovel in a few mussels, dunk a few pieces of bread, and repeat until your bowl is sadly empty. On some nights you can find my good friend, Charlie, using an empty shell as a makeshift spoon to slurp the entire bowl of broth. You just can't help but finish it all.

Just as my wife and I were polishing off our second batch of the doughy pizza bread topped with a sweet marinara, our sandwiches arrived. She took a risk and ordered the Arugula Pear Wrap (\$9). Her whole wheat tortilla was stuffed with peppery arugula, tons of crispy applewood smoked bacon, havarti cheese, dried cranberries, sweet pears simmered in port wine, and brought together with a ranch dressing. I tried to talk her out of ordering it because I thought there was no way that combination was gonna work for her. Maybe I was drunk from all that white wine sauce, but I stole a bite and it was really delicious. The salty bacon and sweet pairs really came together nicely. She loved the flavor and, of course, that it came with a giant mound of perfectly cooked Old Bay fries.

I took one look at the menu and knew I had to have the Veal Napolenta Sandwich (\$10). A soft foot-long roll was packed with tender fried veal, topped with an entire garden of sautéed broccoli rabe, Italian long hot peppers, fried onions, with Parmigiano Reggiano

and aged sharp provolone cheeses melted on top. This bad boy must have weighed five pounds. Each bite made me realize why I missed being home. It was tender, it was crispy, it was simply fantastic. I am not ashamed to admit that at one point, I dipped my sandwich into the white wine sauce leftover from my mussels. I am completely comfortable with that. I'm actually a little proud of myself for trying it, because in that moment of pure ecstasy, I invented the first "Italian Dip" Sandwich! (Trademark pending).

Ventura's Offshore Café is a local hotspot. On most evenings, the restaurant is busy with everyone enjoying their conversation and meals. The menu is huge and there is something that everyone will enjoy. I truly missed the food in South Jersey and **Ventura's** is a prime example of why we needed to come home, and why I don't think we will ever leave.



VENTURA'S OFFSHORE CAFÉ

2015 Shore Rd.
Northfield, NJ
(609) 641-5158
www.venturascafe.com

HOURS:
Open 7 Days a Week.
11 A.M. to 1 A.M.

Eat in, Take Out, or Delivery

PRICES:
The complete menu and prices are listed on their web site. There is even a catering menu to check out for your upcoming special events.

TONY'S TIP:
Ventura's has a great Happy Hour on Monday - Friday, from 4 - 6 PM. They offer reduced drink prices, complimentary bar snacks, gourmet pizzas, and a special that if you buy two appetizers, you get the third one free. Looks like it's time to go back already for more mussels!

Anthony Previti is a criminal defense attorney who appears frequently in Atlantic County Superior Court and he loves food. If you would like your restaurant featured, please send an email to: OutToLunch@boardwalkjournal.com.