

RESTAURANT FOCUS

Hola Lola

3500 Collins Ave., Miami Beach

Deep in the heart of Mid Beach, a recently opened and untraditional Italian restaurant has been the talk of the town for the last couple of months. Hola Lola, which is ensconced in the 1928 Mediterranean-revival Hotel Claridge, is a delightfully compatible addition to the exquisitely renovated, historic gem now run by Clarion. The elegant setting and sensual atmosphere recall the best of the Mediterranean. So does the food. Beginning with the antipasti, the selections at Hola Lola are exceptional. Crab Cakes on a bed of greens and mango, Blackened Beef Tips served with warm blue cheese dressing, and Hola Lola Shrimp bearing 13 spices in a lemon and mint yogurt sauce are so tempting you could forget to save room for the main course. But don't! Although the cuisine focuses on the Apennine Peninsula — as seen in such tasty dishes as the Linguine alla Bolognese and the Mushroom Penne Pasta — the chef has been given great latitude in creating dishes touched by the Caribbean sun as well. All to great effect! The Grilled Mahi Mahi is served with black bean salsa while a mango one flavors the Blackened Grouper. Another taste tempter, the Maui Rib Eye Steak, comes marinated in tropical fruits and then

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Hola Lola is in the Hotel Claridge. Photo by Margaret Griffin

charbroiled to perfection. Of course, no Miami Beach restaurant worth its salt would be complete without a delicious Lobster Tail, and Hola Lola is no exception. If you are looking for something a little more classic, there are also Filet Mignon, Grilled Chicken, Seafood Pasta and other dishes on the menu. A less traditional but favorite selection is the Sesame Seed Ahi Tuna, which is served with garlic wasabi mashed potatoes. The wine list is excellent and filled with wines and champagnes from around the world. There is a full bar attached, or you may opt to finish out your evening relaxing in the gorgeous atrium next door. Private parties may be held there or in an intimate room adjacent to the main dining area. A patio is also available for those warm winter evenings tailored to romance. So resist speeding up Collins for once and say a relaxing hello to the Beach's newest classic, Hola Lola. Call 305-532-5822.