



FISH TALES

November 2019

A Samuels Seafood Magazine



openblue
Cobia



Image by Paul Stamegna

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Spotlight

Ristorante Pesto

Philadelphia, PA

From Their Family, to Yours

by: Jessica Jewel Tyler



"It's like coming home," says Concetta Varallo, also known as Connie, of Ristorante Pesto. The hallmark of a true Italian Restaurant is to be "treated like family," but here, the sentiment rings truer than ever before. At Pesto, every call is personally answered by a member of the Varallo family and every table gets a little appetizer before their meal. The food, the personal attention, and being surrounded by a huge, happy family, will make you forget that they aren't your own kin. In fact, people travel from all around the world to dine at Pesto and they feel like they never left their own dining room.

The design is classic, yet elegant and "green, like pesto." Connie's husband and partner, Chef Giovanni Vallo, also known as John, designed this space. The concept is simple - authentic, decadent meals served in an intimate environment from the Vallo family to your own. The passion and history however, are what make Pesto such a significant part of Italian dining in Philadelphia. For the past 17 years, this eatery has wowed every guest and earned an impeccable reputation, including "Best Pasta Dish" on Racheal Ray's *Little Italy Showdown* and a "#1 Italian Cuisine" Travelers Choice Award from Trip Advisor for the past five years.

Chef John has always held a fervor for food. Growing up in Montella, Italy as one of 20 siblings, he learned the importance of hard work and precision when it comes to satisfying meals. From a young age, he was always helping his family prepare large delicious dishes, whether growing and peeling potatoes, jarring hundreds of tomatoes for the winter, or stepping into the kitchen himself. This is when his passion for cooking developed and he decided to go to culinary school in Italy.

He brings fond memories of Italy into the kitchen by continuing the tradition of making meals by hand, from scratch, with only authentic Italian ingredients. In fact, Pesto has two pasta machines, to make the freshest pasta dishes you can imagine, like the currently featured pumpkin ravioli. He even pays homage to his hometown by using its most treasured ingredient. According to John, Montella, Italy produces 25% of the world's chestnuts and to honor

this fact, he likes to feature a fried chestnut ravioli.

After culinary school, John moved to America and worked in bakeries, even opening his own, until he developed a flour allergy. There, John met his lovely wife Connie and they decided to open a restaurant together (lo E Tu,) get married, and have children. Today Pesto, runs in the family - even for the smallest children. Guests still remember the three little girls learning the ropes in the restaurant and often recount tales of four-year-old Maria cheerfully announcing, "Welcome to my restaurant, it's Italian."

Today they all have an important place at Pesto. After earning her culinary degree, daughter Maria finds herself in the kitchen, Gianna is also working on her culinary skills, and Christina is tending to the front of the house along with her mother Connie. Now they are training the third generation in a similar way and Connie says she's "so proud of the restaurant, family, and staff." There is a lot to be proud of - presently, the kitchen serves five pages of delicious meals and around 20 creative specials (which the wait staff recites daily, from memory) to a full house.

When asked how Pesto can have so many creative, well-liked daily specials, John said the inspiration comes from his mother's recipes growing up and also his more recent trips to Italy. He wants to showcase an approachable and realistic interpretation of Italian eating from the past and into the future. For instance, Chef John slyly nods to his upbringing with his mom's carrots marinated with balsamic, garlic, and herbs that are placed on every table, and that may never change, but he also highlights what's currently on trend on "The Boot." According to Chef John, right now, it's rigatoni (short, wide noodles,) gemelli (double-helix shaped noodles,) and bucatini (hallow, long noodles.)

Be on the lookout for some of these hand-crafted pastas that perfectly hold Pesto's popular bolognese, gravy, or cream sauces, or try their award-winning, signature dish, Seafood Cavatelli, with Shrimp, Lobster, and Crabmeat in a rose' sauce. Whatever you order, you're sure to leave full and happy, just like after a big family dinner at your childhood home.

Employee of the Month



Mike Ansaldo

For almost two decades, Mike Ansaldo, Driver # 36, has showcased an amazing attitude while rolling with every punch and tackling every challenge present to him. While running one of our most key routes in Washington DC, he still manages to go the extra mile to make sure his teammates and our customers have what they need when they need it. He even fills in running our tractor trailers to our supermarket customers. Thanks Mike!

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Celebrate with a Cobia Cornucopia

By Jessica Jewel Tyler



As the weather gets cooler and guests await bountiful plates of warmth and comfort, it's the perfect time to add a full-bodied fish with a cornucopia of options to your menu, Open Blue Cobia. This unique and superior white fish, most closely compared to Swordfish or Chilean Sea Bass, has an amazing sweet flavor with a fresh finish, firm texture, and a large flake. It's wonderfully complemented by a light hint of citrus and herb but can also stand up to the bolder, warmer flavor profiles and fresh produce of the fall harvest.

Open Blue Cobia is hearty enough to sit center-plate with mushrooms and potatoes, brussel sprouts and bacon, or the lovely roasted squash and zucchini of the season, yet delicate enough to "fall back" in a robust tomato sauce or Asian curry. Because of its unique taste and versatility, Cobia also helps to add an extra dimension of flavor to chowders and fish stews.

This is a superfish that can be prepared in virtually any application. And because of the higher oil content, Cobia stays tasty and moist in every dish. Open Blue Cobia is great for grilling, broiling, searing, baking, and many more creative possibilities including smoking or

even slathering in barbeque. It's also the perfect season to enjoy Cobia roasted to highlight the addictively crispy texture of the skin and the sweet and meaty flavor of the flesh.

Open Blue Cobia may just be the most versatile fish in the ocean. Open Blue even won the Seafood Excellence Award for most convenient product at the world's largest seafood show, Seafood Expo Global in Brussels. But the accolades don't stop there. They are the world's first Cobia facility to achieve four-star Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP) and Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) certification. In addition, they have achieved certification from Friend of the Sea, Global Gap, and BRC Global Standards. Their glowing report also includes a Monterey Bay Seafood Watch "Good Alternative" rating.

The sustainability achievements Open Blue has accomplished, along with the quality, taste, and convenience of their star studded Cobia is only achieved through a passion the company holds for "feeding current and future generations in harmony with the ocean." Open Blue Cobia is leading the charge in innovative and responsible open ocean aquaculture, so that chefs can create delicious, original dishes without compromise.

This sustainable fish is raised in its native environment eight to ten miles off shore of the beautiful Panama Coast, fully submerged at depths of up to 250 feet. The ideal environment provides pristine waters with swift currents for healthier, tastier fish, while the offshore distance, helps protect sensitive coastal areas. This method has been proven to not only have lower environmental impacts than traditional shore options, but it can actually help to rebuild ocean ecosystems.

Open Blue Cobia is quickly becoming a favorite of many chefs because of its versatility, sustainability, and amazing flavor. The thick fillets are also perfectly sized for a convenient, no waste option that can achieve anything. We invite you to share in the excitement and be inspired by Cobia's Cornucopia of possibilities. Before you know it, you may even see this superfish next to your cranberries and stuffing.

In The News...

By Jessica Jewel Tyler

Samuels Does Vegas: The 2019 Vegas Food Expo



A city full of imagination, ingenuity, and indulgence, no one does food quite like Vegas. That's why we visited Vegas Food Expo this year. Held October 8th-10th, in the Mandalay Bay Convention Center, this intimate setting is full of hand-picked vendors, making it the best place to discover unique hidden gems and specialty or artisan brands that could be the next big thing in American Restaurants.

Samuels stepped up to the plate with heavy hitters Jail Island Salmon and Astan Tuna - two brands that highlight

sustainability, traceability, and overall premium hand-crafted quality.

A Samuels Seafood exclusive, Jail Island is the hottest Salmon in

seafood right now. Harvested from the only 4-star Best Aquaculture Practices Certified producer in North America, Jail Island Salmon is the only fish that helps maintain the environment while also giving back to the wild. A portion of all proceeds help recover the endangered Wild Salmon in the Bay of Fundy.

Astan is another gamechanger for harvesting the world's first traceable Tuna. Touting a shorter out of water time, a fresher, cleaner taste, and a golden catch certificate in every box, Astan is the new face of artisan Tuna.

Guests also enjoyed tastings of these products along with Ducktrap Pastrami Smoked Salmon and an assorted variety of some of the hundreds of fresh Oysters we stock fresh daily. Vegas exclusive Golden Nights, named lovingly after the home hockey team, was the star of the show. From the same company as our delicious Purple Mountain Oysters, this West Coast Oyster is similarly full bodied and briny with a firm texture and a light mineral finish. In addition, guests viewed of our "best in show" winning fish displays.



Open Blue Cobia Wellington

While there is very little evidence of what the first pilgrims ate that November day in 1621, historians largely agree that they enjoyed the bounty of seafood provided by the adjacent Atlantic coast. Meat options were also shared such as water fowl and venison, but surprisingly, there were no turkeys on the table. According to historians, the Pilgrims dined on a mostly seafood dinner including Eels, Cod, and tons of Shellfish. So, while having a pescetarian “turkey-day” may seem to be a bit unorthodox, you’re actually keeping in line with a great American tradition. In fact, this Thanksgiving tradition is still practiced all over New England.

Seafood doesn’t often appear on our Thanksgiving tables for the rest of the country however, with the exception of Oyster Stuffing. Another New England tradition, Oysters were often mixed with breadcrumbs and used to stuff chickens or turkeys to provide more sustenance to family meals. Because meat was expensive, Oysters provided a low budget way to fill your stomach and nourish your body with protein. Not to mention, the flavor – the salty ocean brine is a beautiful contrast to the sweetness of the baguette or cornbread. This rich and moist dish highlights any Oyster well, and with the convenience of our Shucked West Coast Oysters, sold by the half-gallon, prep is a breeze.

Oyster stuffing doesn’t have to be (and shouldn’t be) the only ocean fare on your holiday table however. At Samuels, we look to the pilgrims for Thanksgiving inspiration, or as we call it, “Fishgiving.” Last year, our corporate Chef, Anne Coll, created a Cobia Wellington as a main dish that’s decadent enough to make you pardon your turkey this holiday. Open Blue Cobia’s dense, meaty flesh is a perfect alternative to beef. Chef Anne marinated the Cobia in Santa Ines Extra Virgin Olive Oil, lemon, and fresh thyme, and wrapped it in Swiss chard, a thin layer of the seafood mousseline, and a puff pastry for a dish that is crispy yet succulent and full flavored.

“Fishgiving” at Samuels

By Jessica Jewel Tyler

Another main dish option, is Lionfish, also coincidentally called Turkeyfish because of their ornate fins that resemble feathers. Lionfish are not only delicious, with buttery taste and flaky texture, but they also boast an amazing wow factor. In addition, eating this invasive species is 100% sustainable. For a more authentic catch try Eels, Cod, or Lobster as your main dish. Historians agree that Eels were one of the most significant additions to the table. Because the texture of the meat is soft yet sturdy and the flavor is mild and with just a hint of sweetness, it’s capable of taking on any flavor profile or cooking application.

A whole baked Cod would also add a touch of accuracy to your meal or for your convenience, we offer Rafols Baccala, or Salt Cod. One of the first cured foods, Baccala is a time honored holiday tradition across vast cultures and remains on plates because of the versatility and unparalleled flavor. Rafols products contain a multitude of desalted, ready to use items with perfect taste and texture that simply can’t be duplicated – they are robust, sweet, and briny with a slightly chewy, succulent texture. It’s great for crudo applications, fish stews, cod cakes, fritters, and even more. The tender cuts of Shredded Baccala are a welcome addition to a salad or festive green bean medley.

And of course, Lobster can be the star of any show especially Fresh Maine Lobsters. This precious meat is a delicacy this time of year because it’s softer, sweeter, and more succulent! As a main dish or a side, shellfish dominated the pilgrim’s feast that day, so to bring history a littler close to your table, add Fresh Maine Lobster, Blu Crabmeat, or JC Walker Clams. Lobster/Crab mac and cheese or mashed potatoes will mix the past with the present while adding amazing flavor and decadence to your table. Additionally, now is the perfect time to serve a Clam or seafood chowder to warm your guests from the inside out, they will be thankful.

There are so many amazing options for putting seafood on your holiday table and we can’t wait to see what you come up with. We hope you are looking forward to restoring the tradition of “fishgiving” this year, because whether you serve seafood in addition to today’s favorites or give up the bird “cold turkey,” you are offering a rare and tasty look into the history of America. This is a nation that was built on fish and this year, and every other, we give thanks for the ocean’s bounty.



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Chefs Corner



Chef Anne Coll

Questions or Comments?
Chef Anne will be happy to assist.
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Image by Paul Stamegna

Cozy Fall Nights with Open Blue Cobia

by Chef Anne Coll



November is the month for fall festivities and Thanksgiving celebrations. And Open Blue Cobia is a great center of the plate item to serve to your guests, family, and friends. It's a perfect substitute for the normal roasted chicken, beef, pork, or lamb that are typically prepared this time of year. Not only is Open Blue Cobia delicious, it is nutritious as well. Open Blue Cobia has higher level of omega-three fatty acids than Salmon, making this fish an excellent choice of protein for any meal. Open Blue Cobia is amazing grilled, steamed, braised, roasted, or pan seared.

While fall produce is still readily available, like sweet potatoes, pumpkins, apples, parsnips, and frost sweetened cabbages, these earthy flavors pair perfectly with Open Blue Cobia. I love curry spices and Open Blue Cobia melds nicely with these flavors as well. Marinating the Cobia with lemongrass, ginger, and Santa Ines Extra Virgin Olive Oil brings the fish to another level. For this preparation, I like to grill the Cobia on a medium flame for about four minutes on each side. This leaves the flesh of the Open Blue Cobia succulent and moist. Then I pair it with a gingered sweet potato puree and a Thai yellow curry sauce flavored with kaffir lime leaves. The Open Blue Cobia is then topped with a pickled apple relish. This is a great way to showcase this hearty fish with local fall produce.

It is a well-known fact that fish was served at the first Thanksgiving

and Open Blue Cobia is amazing for a center of the plate option instead of the usual Turkey. For this option, I like to season the Cobia with fresh thyme, lemon zest, salt, and pepper. I then wrap the fish in blanched savoy cabbage and bacon. The wrapped Cobia is placed in the fridge for about a ½ hour so the fish torchon sets up. Then the Cobia is seared on medium, to crisp the bacon, and finished in a 400-degree oven for about 10 minutes. The Open Blue Cobia is sliced and served on top of Aunt Connie's Oyster Stew and garnished with a few PEI Mussels. This dish is a great addition to any Thanksgiving celebration.

Another fun Open Blue Cobia cut is the collars. This product will wow any guest and are a wonderful first course. These Open Blue Cobia "wings" go well with any flavor profile. I like to make them Korean style marinated in a puree of soy, ginger, garlic, sesame, and Asian pear. The wings are broiled until crispy and tossed in gochujang, then topped with scallion and sesame seeds. The wings are then served with kimchi or a sesame cabbage slaw. This is a fun and festive appetizer that is sure to please.

No matter what preparation one makes with Open Blue Cobia, it will make any guest happy. Open Blue Cobia is very versatile and pairs with many flavor profiles. It is a great addition to any Holiday dinner. It is also a healthy alternative to other proteins.



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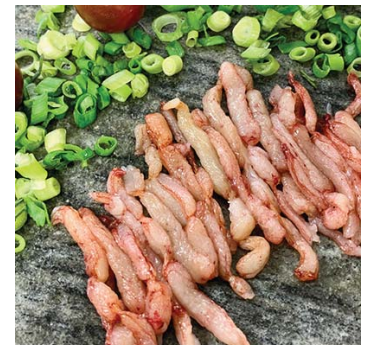


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