

# Ciao Bella

## Maria's Top Five Italian Restaurants

-by Maria Desiderata Montana

### Venice Ristorante

4365 Executive Drive, San Diego • 858-597-1188  
www.veniceristorante.com

Loud with song (specifically opera) and fashionably dressed with scenic Venetian-style murals, linen-topped tables, candlelight, and a private wine cellar, this is Italian fine dining at its very best. I can honestly say that the *Gnocchi con Salsiccia* is the best I have ever tasted, bar none.



### Trattoria Acqua

1298 Prospect Street in La Jolla • 858-454-0709  
www.trattoriaacqua.com

*Trattoria Acqua* is a cozy and romantic destination near the La Jolla Cove where you and that special someone can savor superbly crafted Italian fare. Executive Chef Damaso Lee uses fresh and organic ingredients to provide an explosion of mouthwatering flavors. Choose from an extensive selection of homemade pastas, grilled fresh fish, fowl and meats, pizzas, salads and decadent desserts. My pick is the *Tutto Mare alla Diavola* with Maine lobster tail, shrimp, mussels, clams and calamari served over homemade linguini in a spicy roasted tomato sauce. Don't miss it!

### Osteria Panevino

722 Fifth Avenue, San Diego • 619-595-7959  
www.osteriapanevino.com

Complete with an onsite bakery boasting fresh baked bread, pasta and desserts, *Osteria Panevino* is one of the finest dining establishments in the Gaslamp District. Executive Chef Giacomo Serafini offers mouthwatering Italian specialties. The *Pasta e Fagioli* tastes like my own mother's recipe.



### Petrini's

610 West Ash St., San Diego • 619-595-0322

Chef/Proprietor David Petrini keeps family and friends at the table with his concept of "La Famiglia Mangia" (The Family Eats). Stop in and enjoy my favorite: a light, thin-crust *Smoked Salmon Pizetta* (pizza) lightly brushed with pesto sauce and topped with Roma tomatoes, red onions, capers and freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano.

### Bottega de "La Strada"

835 4th Avenue San Diego • 619/234-6538  
www.bottagedelastrada.com

This rustic Tuscan tavern-style restaurant offers a casual environment with authentic home cooking at reasonable prices. I grew up eating my uncle's homemade prosciutto and to my surprise, the *Coccoli e Prosciutto* (pizza dough stuffed with fresh mozzarella cheese) fried and served with Prosciutto di Parma, reminded me of home.

