

VEGAS

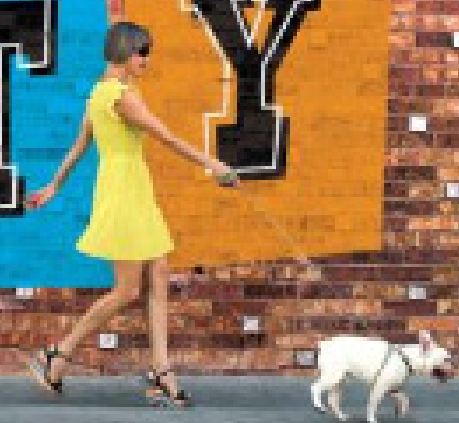
Seventen

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BEST
OF THE
GIRTY

2013



DINER'S NOTEBOOK

MAX JACOBSON

A FAST-FOOD FIND, PITA AND PIZZA FOR THE GLUTEN-FREE-FREE, AND HERE COMES KUMI

This week I ventured into **McDonald's** and **Carl's Jr.** to try the new Egg White Delight McMuffin and Atlantic Cod Charbroiled Sandwich. Carl's Jr. does a charbroiled Atlantic Cod filet with tartar sauce, tomato and lettuce on a honey-wheat bun, which, at 420 calories with 15 grams of fat, is one of the tastiest new fast-food items I've had in some time. I wish I had such praise for McDonald's, though I appreciate their efforts to offer healthy options. At 250 calories, made from egg whites, lean Canadian bacon and white cheddar on a toasted whole-grain English muffin, the Egg White Delight McMuffin is a noble failure. On limp bread, it was as tasty as warm Play-Doh.

Then, magically, a day later, I had what might have been the best use of yeast, water and flour I've ever tasted in my life. At **Chi Spacca** (6610 Melrose Ave., 323-297-1133), Mario Batali and Nancy Silverton's place adjacent to their Osteria Mozza in L.A., I experienced focaccia di Recco, a specialty bread made in a special oven that burns almond wood at over 600 degrees. Silverton discovered the focaccia in Liguria, Italy, and tweaked the recipe more than 800 times before she got it right. Golden brown, brushed with olive oil and sea salt, and filled with salty cheese from Italy, this golden masterpiece has to be seen—and tasted—to be believed. Their 42-ounce tomahawk pork chop, cooked over hardwood coals, is another item worth a detour.

Back at the ranch, two restaurants I admire are opening new locations. One is **Crazy Pita**, Mehdi ZarHouf's restaurant in the District at Green Valley Ranch that specializes in top-notch stuffed pita sandwiches, plus terrific fare from the owner's native Casablanca, Morocco, such as the best value lamb shank in the city, served with couscous and Moroccan-style rotisserie chicken. Crazy Pita is slated to also be in Town Square in mid-fall and in the Fashion Show before the year's end.

Meanwhile, Sammy Ladeki of **Sammy's Woodfire Pizza** is opening on the corner of Green Valley Parkway and Pebble Road, and is adding interest to an already eclectic, innovative menu of exotic pizzas and starters. The digs, to be called Sammy's Restaurant Bar & Grill, will bring lounge-y dining to Green Valley in an 8,000-square-foot space highlighted by a "living room" that will take up nearly half the restaurant, and featuring a tapas-style menu of small plates in a casual setting. Some of the new dishes include mini duck tacos, Japanese chicken meatballs and *tebow*, a soft Mediterranean cheese served with flatbread. The restaurant will be open 24/7 and serve breakfast, too. An opening date has yet to be announced, but it should

Finally, **Kumi Japanese Restaurant + Bar** helmed by Yellowtail's Akira Back opened to the public July 23 at Mandalay Bay, joining Light Group's other concepts there, Citizens Kitchen & Bar and the revamped Red Square. Back's modern Japanese menu with a Korean-American twist includes whitefish carpaccio, Kobe beef tacos and a bone-in pork chop with apple-miso glaze. Hungry, yet?

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