

TWO LOUISIANA RESTAURANTS EMBRACE LOCAL DESIGN TALENTS



Semolina: A design inspired by pasta

In a region renowned for its spectacular restaurants, few gain immediate recognition for great food, friendly service, and exceptional interiors. Two recent exceptions sit proudly side by side at the re-developed Clearview Mall. Serranos Salsa Company and Semolina Pasta Restaurant have a lot in common in addition to their proximity; both offer menus that are internationally inspired and both selected local design and construction talents to create vibrant new design concepts.

Montgomery Roth Architecture & Interior Design, an internationally recognized hospitality design firm, was called upon by both restaurants. For Semolina, Architect of Record Kirby Pecot worked with Montgomery Roth to develop a new restaurant concept titled: "Adventures in Pasta." Ellis Construction, known locally for their restaurant expertise, was also selected by both. "Bringing each restaurant's vision to light has been a very gratifying experience," says Bret Ellis. Montgomery Roth worked with local artists and vendors to help realize each restaurant's distinct design vision, including: Kathryn Lee, Bevolo Lighting, Marlin Donham, American Aquatic Gardens, Walls of Italy, Casa del Corazon, Jezebel's, Tipic Accent, Frahn Koerner, Rosetree Glass Studio, Mercury Injection, Fortuneline, Marcus Bronson, and Third Generation Upholstery.

Semolina Pasta Restaurant's collaboration of local talent created a casually sophisticated new concept that incorporates the company's original signature design elements. "We wanted to bring the fun back into the restaurant's design and at the same time celebrate our signature pasta dishes and salads," says John Paisant, C.O.O. "Montgomery Roth was exceptional; their unbridled enthusiasm was contagious, and their attention to detail was incredible."

"The design really works," adds Paisant. "It offers inviting and comfortable atmospheres that provide distinct dining opportunities."

The design incorporates sheer draperies fab-

ricated by Davis Draperies in shades of celadon green and ocean blue, and hand-blown finials fabricated by New Orleans School of GlassWorks.

"The one consistent ingredient in the diverse Semolina menu was pasta, so we used it as our main inspiration for the interior design," explains Montgomery Roth Principal Lisa Roth. "The theme was vibrant, fun, and easy to incorporate throughout all aspects of the design. Restaurant designs inspired by food concepts really work." Roth worked side by side with artist Luis Colmenares to create pasta-themed sculptures and hand painted tables.

"I wanted to create a light-hearted atmosphere, and what could be more fun than being surrounded by noodles!" says Project Manager Jack Forbes. "Spaghetti was my inspiration for the custom iron patio fence and the restaurant's entry door handles, which were fabricated by Andrew's Welding Shop."

"Using local artists and artisans is one way we maintain the individual project uniqueness as well as a high level of quality control to our designs," notes Vickie Small, Montgomery Roth Designer. "New Orleans has a great number of artistic disciplines that work really well with themed restaurants."

Semolina has a dining capacity of 180 seats and features pasta creations inspired by over a dozen countries. Another twist is Semolina's full bar, which seats 30 and offers specialty martinis, Semolina's own sangria, frozen bellinis, and numerous wines by the glass.



MONTGOMERY ROTH
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INTERIOR DESIGN

Serranos Salsa Company is a vibrant yet welcoming restaurant with a festive spirit, serving a menu highlighted by "South American Fare with a Latin Flair."

The architecture and colorful interior design of the space was conceived and fully designed by Montgomery Roth in a turn key format. "We found a design firm who could look at a project from the customer's perspective and deliver the elements necessary to satisfy each of the senses," comments Serranos Salsa Company co-owner Sean Malone. "The team was able to pull off a fabulous design in a compressed schedule, both on time and on budget!"

The intensity begins at the front door, where the festive Cuban color palette pops from the walls. In the elevated bar you will find artwork inspired by the festivals of Mexico and sexy, curved banquettes where guests can sample over 70 amazing tequilas and rums. "We discovered these incredible ceremonial masks at this fabulous shop in the French Quarter that we knew would compliment Barth Brothers' surreal Caribbean Carnival mural," says the project's art director Brian Bockman. "The upbeat interior spaces are energized with items not just from Mexico but from many of the same countries which influence the exotic dishes." The eclectic collection of artwork includes antique iron gates, lanterns from South America, Colonial ceramics, and hand-painted tin ceiling panels found on Tchoupitoulas Street.

"We were amazed at how Montgomery Roth tied together the overall design and food concepts," says Malone. "Our cuisine is unique, and we thought it would be difficult to create an

atmosphere to mirror our menu items."

"With dishes such as Latin grilled quail, crabmeat and bacon quesadillas, and Ecuadorian ceviche, we offer a culinary palette from which to design," adds co-owner Andy Blouin. Serranos' menu features traditional Latin and Mexican items with a special focus on grilled dishes not traditionally available in this region.

"We wanted to create a new and exciting atmosphere distinct from our Baton Rouge restaurant, and we are thrilled with New Orleans' great design talent," says Blouin. "Our customers comment every day on the emphasis we put towards our service, cuisine, and atmosphere."

"Their name is derived from that 'fiery' Mexican pepper, and we wanted to sprinkle that exotic spice throughout," comments Rhonda Smith, project designer. "Each section of the multi-level restaurant, with its contrasting colors and graphic fabrics, has a different feel, but the overall ambiance is definitely hot!"

With seating for 350, Serranos Salsa Company is one of the largest restaurant and bar combinations in Metairie. It provides private dining, patio dining, and full service catering for any setting.

"We feel that restaurants can, and should, be more than just eating establishments," adds Malone. "Montgomery Roth's talents allowed us to give our customers the fabulous dining experience of what Serranos Salsa Company truly is."



Serranos: The atmosphere is as festive as the food