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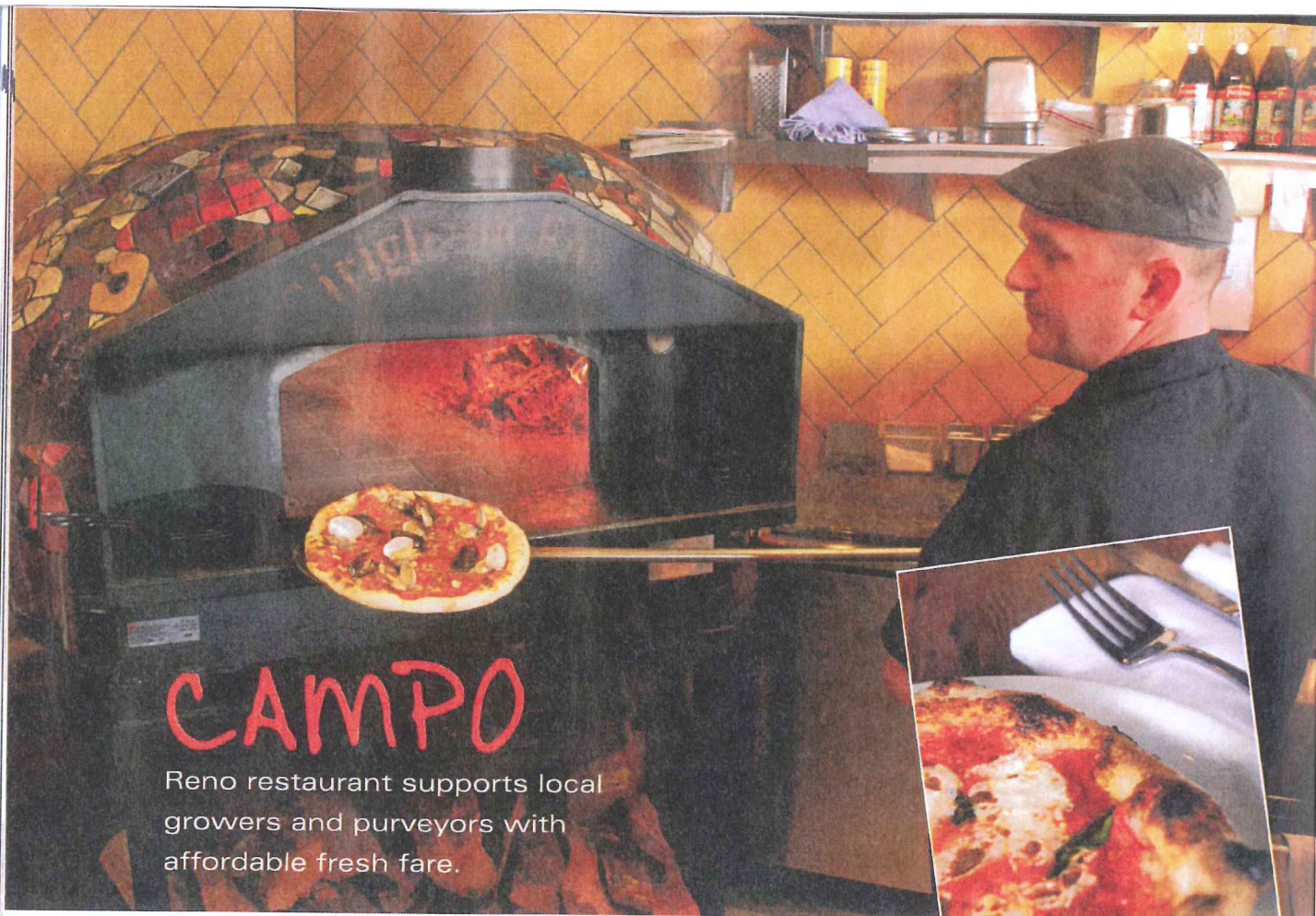


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TRAVELING WITH PETS? LICKS THE COMPETITION

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Pizzaiolo Jeff Barnard extracts a fresh pie from Campo's imported Italian pizza oven in Reno.



STORY & PHOTOS BY CHARLIE JOHNSTON

Since opening in November 2011, Campo has quickly climbed the ranks of the most popular eateries in downtown Reno. Though most new restaurants experience an initial phase of inflated visitation, it is safe to say that Campo's popularity can be attributed to more than honeymoon allure. That is because what lies beyond the usually full dining room and charming décor is an unmistakable passion for the community...and really good food.

"Buy great products, and don't screw them up," says owner and executive chef Mark Estee, in an exaggeratedly simplified synopsis of his culinary philosophy. The former owner of Truckee, California's perennial favorite Moody's Bistro & Lounge, Estee's passion and acclaim for culinary art finds a new stage at Campo, in the heart of Reno's Riverwalk District, a location he describes as a "downtown anchor spot."

Wood-fired pizzas, homemade pastas, and house-cured meats are the stars of this gastronomic show. Estee makes twice-weekly trips to Great Basin Community Food Co-op and utilizes all the organic and locally sourced food he can find. Among the few exceptions to Campo's reliance on local food are tomatoes for pizza and other sauces and flour for house-

made pastas and pizza dough, both imported from Italy to ensure that Italian classics are prepared with the most authentic ingredients available.

Exposed laminated beams, recycled tabletops, dark-stained concrete floors, a warm color palate, and the ever-present scent of hardwoods burning in the pizza oven create a rustic-meets-industrial ambiance that is both hip and relaxing. Community seating near the bar accentuates the restaurant's trendy neighborhood-eatery feel. Outside, bold neon lends a retro charm in the two locally designed and built signs: one above the restaurant's entrance facing the Truckee River and the other, a bright-pink pig, on the Sierra Street side of the eatery. The pig is lit whenever Campo's chefs are butchering meats for the restaurant's signature house-cured *salumi*, savory Italian meats such as pancetta, prosciutto, and salami.

The menu at Campo changes daily. You read that right; there is a new menu *every day*. The longevity of some offerings ensures a handful of favorites hang around for a long time, but you can expect at least a few different items each visit. On that ever-changing menu, it is hard to find anything that isn't delicious—it is also hard to write about anything three months in advance without guarantee that it will be on hand when readers visit for themselves.

A selection of house-cured meats sits aside pizza bread, cheeses, and house mustard in the popular Campo Salumi Board appetizer—a staple of the restaurant's respective brunch, lunch, "tweener," and dinner menus.

I'm fairly certain that the ubiquitous V.P.N. Margherita Pizza will be available on every menu indefinitely. V.P.N. is a title bestowed by the *Associazione Vera Pizza Napoletana* and designates the pie as a genuine Neapolitan pizza. In other words, it's the real deal. Fresh basil harmonizes with sweet, attention-grabbing tomato sauce and creamy, comforting house mozzarella. The thin crust has just the right amount of oven char on the bottom and small dough bubbles atop the pie. The satisfying crunch and char are courtesy of the beautifully rustic Cirigliano Forni brick oven, which delivers 750 to 1000 degrees of pizza-perfecting heat.

Like the tomatoes and flour for the dough, the oven also hails from *Italia*. More innovative pizza creations utilize Campo's cured meats, such as a unique pie topped with clams and mussels. The subtle flavor of the plump and juicy shellfish combines with decadently salty house-made braised pancetta for a savory taste uncommon to most pizzas. Sweet tomato sauce and generous slices of garlic cloves balance the pie's savory flavors.

Another of my favorites that seems like a relatively permanent menu fixture is thick and satisfying pappardelle with wild boar bolognese and delicate *oro antico pecorino*, a hard cheese made from sheep's milk. A generous portion of hearty and meaty sauce sticks to the impossibly fresh inch-wide pasta, ensuring uniform flavor throughout the filling Italian comfort-food dish.

Desserts, as unpredictably transient as their entrée counterparts, run the entire sweets spectrum. Chocolate pistachio tart with blood orange sorbetto, a delightful mix of savory and acidic flavors, delights diners' palates in every bite with its contrasting variety of sweetness.

Estee is quick to point out that he could not put everything at Campo together on his own and is effusive in his praise of general manager Giancarlo Pellegrino, who worked with him at Moody's Bistro, co-executive chef Arturo D. Moscoso, and his entire staff. And Estee's passion for the restaurant is as evident in his actions as his words. Following our lunchtime interview he excuses himself, washes his hands, and ties on an apron to jump behind the line and help at the height of the lunch rush.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Campo
50 N. Sierra St., Reno, NV 89501
camporeno.com
775-737-9555

NIGHTLY SPECIALS

- **Monday Movie and Meatballs**
— Every Monday, Campo offers a free serving of Campo Meatballs to customers with same-day movie ticket stubs with the purchase of an entrée or pizza.
- **Farmer, Food, and Friends Tuesday**
— The third Tuesday of each month, Campo features meals built around specific foods (and farmers) and shares proceeds from the evening with local nonprofits.
- **Wednesday Cocktail Night**
— Campo introduces new cocktails and special tastings every Wednesday starting at 5:30 p.m.
- **Thursday Date Night** — Every Thursday, Campo features a special date night four-course prix fixe menu for two.
- **Saturday Wine Time** — Campo presents wine seminars, tastings, and pairings the first Saturday of each month.
- **Sunday No Ni Night** — The second Sunday of every month, Campo features family-style three-course meals that feature dishes from grandparents' recipes. Customers are invited to submit the recipes of their grandparents to be featured during *No Ni Night*.



ISTOCK

RECIPE

Kale Salad with poached egg, Parmesan cheese crumble, and lemon garlic dressing

For the crumble:

Heat oven to 300 degrees Fahrenheit, and line a cookie sheet with parchment or nonstick pad. Sprinkle with grated Parmesan cheese to form a thin layer, and bake until cheese melts and browns. Remove from oven, and let cool. Break up as needed.

For the dressing:

- 1.5 oz. fresh lemon juice
- 1.5 oz. champagne vinegar
- 4 oz. grape seed oil
- 4 oz. extra virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons chopped garlic
- Kosher salt (to taste)
- Fresh black pepper (to taste)

Whisk ingredients for dressing thoroughly. In a separate bowl, toss julienne kale with salt and pepper. Add dressing, and toss well. Add the parmesan crumble, and toss again. Place in bowl, and top with poached egg.