

Vaca frita or lechon pizza? Get it at this new Italian-Cuban restaurant in Hialeah

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If you never knew Cuban-Italian fusion was a thing, this new Hialeah restaurant is here to show you all about it.

La Romanita Restaurant & Lounge opens this week next to Amelia Earhart Park, and with it comes a menu influenced by Havana-born executive chef Reinier “Rey” Mendez, who started his career as the manager of a pizzeria in Union Francesa, Cuba. In Miami, he has worked at such concepts as STK Miami, Shula’s Steakhouse, Casa Tua Cucina in Brickell City Centre, and most recently Lure Fish Bar at Loews Miami Beach Hotel.

Chef Rey’s new restaurant, from Prestige Hospitality group, seats 65 in its dining room, with an outdoor patio that seats up to 40. The open kitchen will serve Latin-inspired dishes as well as seafood, salads and meats in addition to pasta and pizzas.

Expect appetizers, which run from \$7-\$18, to include garbanzo frito (chorizo, chickpeas, and sofrito); tartare di tonna (yellowfin tuna, shallot, parsley, lemon juice, extra virgin olive oil, cured egg yolk, and avocado) and crudo mixto (yellowfin tuna, salmon, snapper, passionfruit, vinaigrette, and spicy oil). You can also order lighter fare like salads (\$10-\$18).

Homemade pastas run \$14-\$32. Choose your shape — orecchiette, spaghetti, penne, or fettuccine — then choose a sauce like carbonara, amatriciana, or gamberoni (with shrimp, white wine, parsley, butter and capers). Meat



La Romanita Restaurant & Lounge, located next to Amelia Earhart Park in Hialeah, serves pasta and pizza, plus seafood and salads. Below, executive chef Reinier “Rey” Mendez.

and meatless lasagnas will also be made daily.

While the pastas are distinctly Italian, La Romanita’s take on pizzas (\$15-\$26) exhibit a Cuban flair. One comes topped with vaca frita and tomato sofrito sauce; another, La Lechona, is topped with shredded pork. There’s also a Zetas Y Tartufo pizza with truffle white sauce, cheese, mushrooms and truffle oil.

Seafood selections (\$18-\$32) include salmon, branzino with pine nut puree and spinach and La Tuna China, crispy tuna with shrimp stir-fried rice and onions. You can also order steaks, pork shoulder, roast rabbit or braised lamb (\$21-\$64).

La Romanita offers something different for the neighborhood, says Dennis Rodriguez, partner of Prestige Companies. The wine list features more than 80 different types of wine from around the world, and the restau-

rant will host live jazz on the weekends from local musicians and performers.

“Chef Rey’s unique cooking style coupled with the restaurant’s grower champagnes and boutique wines approach, will elevate Hialeah to new levels in the local culinary scene,” Rodriguez said in a statement.

La Romanita Restaurant & Lounge
Where: 7755 West Fourth Ave., Hialeah

Opening: Aug. 5

Hours: Noon-10 p.m. Monday through Thursday; noon-11:30 p.m. Friday; 11 a.m.-11:30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday

More info: laromanitarestaurantandlounge.com or @la_romanita_restaurant on Instagram



Executive chef Reinier “Rey” Mendez of the new La Romanita restaurant in Hialeah.