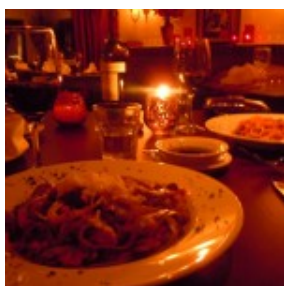


Restaurant owner gambles on moving to more visible location

By Kathryn Reed

Adapting to change – that’s Dale Dodd’s approach to staying viable in the always unpredictable restaurant business.

Unable to come to an agreement with his landlord on Ski Run Boulevard, Dodd decided to move his 20-year-old Scusa’s restaurant to Highway 50 in the middle of South Lake Tahoe where he had been operating the 2-year-old Tahoe Grille.



Scusa's has moved to Highway 50.
Photos/LTN

If a location can be found that would be suitable for Tahoe Grille, he will revive what he said had been a successful restaurant. After all, he’s been in the restaurant business for 35 years, so he knows patience is part of the game.

And buying the property where Scusa’s is will eliminate any landlord-tenant squabbles.

Plus, the traffic up Ski Run isn’t like it used to be – and it has little to do with the ongoing recession in Lake Tahoe. When the gondola opened in 2000 it meant tourists in

particular no longer needed to get to Heavenly Mountain Resort via Ski Run. Then the Marriott properties opened two years later. Since then people staying in the main bed base area of the South Shore have been taking advantage of not needing to start their ski day at the California Lodge, and therefore never driving on Ski Run Boulevard.

“March used to be our biggest month with all the destination skiers,” Dodd said. He said it’s been much quieter on that street when it comes to skiers looking for a place to eat after a day on the slopes.

He is hoping the move will get him drive-by diners as well as be better for people who got frustrated with the parking situation at the old site. Here he has a 30-car lot.

Dodd also has more tables to fill. He went from 21 to 30. In the summer he’d like to develop the back area into al fresco dining.

Scusa’s opened in its new location a week ago. The menu is the same, though some items from the Grille may make their way onto a revised version in the future. Things like Lobster Gnocchi, Oven Roasted Salmon with a Beurre Blanc, and Rosemary Roasted Chicken with Polenta were favorites with Tahoe Grille customers.

Not one who eats meat or fish, I never went to the Grille. But when Dodd took it over from the owners of the Thai restaurant, he gutted the place. What a pleasant change. It’s clean, inviting and warm.

Dodd said hanging some pictures is about all that needed to be done to have the Grille become Scusa’s.



Frank
Benvenuto
plays
saxophone for
diners.

To the left of the entry is a room that can be shut off for private parties. We opted to dine in that room to be able to hear Frank Benvenuto play sax. A nice change from so many Tahoe restaurants – we could hear the music and still have a conversation.

We started the night with the Frito-Misto Scusa (\$7.95). This appetizer is very tasty – with garlic, artichoke hearts, olives and other goodies.

Both of our entrees ended up being lunch as well. Sue loved the spiciness of the Sausage Linguine Bolognese (\$18.95). I thoroughly enjoyed the Spinach Pasta Mediterranean (\$16.95). They didn't skimp on the veggies.

Scusa's is open for dinner starting at 5pm every day but Mondays during the shoulder season. From Dec. 15-April 15 it is open seven days a week.