

Hot Hot Steaks, the Many Delicacies of Chicago, and Bellagio Adds Caviar Service

By **Max Jacobson**

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Steak lovers will be happy to learn that a **Ruth's Chris Steakhouse** has resurfaced in **Harrah's Casino** (693-6000), in the sprawling room formerly home to the casino's steakhouse, the Range. Ruth Fertel founded the chain in her native New Orleans in the '60s, and since, it has grown into a colossus, with more than 130 locations worldwide.

I stopped by for a family-style dinner, which I enjoyed with several members of the local media, and I still love this chain. Appetizers such as shrimp remoulade, blue crab cakes and veal osso buco ravioli are all worth a shout, and there is a killer stuffed chicken for those who don't cotton to the restaurant's trademark sizzling prime steaks, which come on plates heated to 500 degrees. Don't touch that plate.

Over on the south side of town, **Windy City Beefs + Pizza** (9711 S. Eastern Ave., 388-4300) has opened, a spinoff of its Summerlin location, which does not serve pizza. Since we're talking Windy City, we're also talking deep dish, in this case, a thick-crust tomato pie that takes about 25 minutes to bake.

The good news is that this is a delicious pie that will feed 3-4, and that you can call in your order before you arrive. This is also one of the city's best places for other Chicago specialties, such as a proper Chicago hot dog (Vienna Beef), a delicious Italian beef (served dipped or wet, with the tart pickled vegetables known as *giardiniera*), and Vienna Beef's famous foot-long Maxwell Street Polish, which requires IMHO, a Maalox chaser.

Meanwhile, on the Canal Walk at the **Venetian**, the venerable **Canonita** (414-3773), originally opened by Texas chef Stephan Pyles, has a new look, a new menu and a new chef, Donna Willey, recently from Border Grill, who specializes in the foods of Mexico City.

The restaurant now sports a patio facing the canal with street umbrellas and a new archway, 60 tequilas (many premium), and Willey's signature dishes, such as a ceviche trio, Patzcuaro duck relleno and roasted Santa Rosa pork barbacoa.

The Buffet in Bellagio has upgraded its Friday and Saturday evening dinners with an interesting new station featuring traditional, ikura and tobiko caviars. From 3:30–10 p.m. during the buffet's gourmet dinner service, an all-you-can-eat caviar option is included in the price of this dinner, a reasonable \$37.99.

Finally, **MOzen Bistro** at the Mandarin Oriental (590-8882) is now offering a jazz brunch every Sunday at \$58 per person. The menu features seafood, dim sum, a carving station and many other goodies noon-2:30 p.m.

Hungry, yet?