



# TASTE

by Bettye Beal

## Mezza Luna at Valley Bend:

### Where Southern Inspiration Meets Mediterranean Italian Cuisine

Designed as an authentic Italian *trattoria* with the oak-fired brick oven central to the warm Mediterranean atmosphere, Mezza Luna is not quite a formal *ristorante*, yet more than a common *osteria* (or tavern), nestled in the heart of Jones Valley at Valley Bend. In Italy, the casual ambiance of the *trattoria* does not require a menu, but in Huntsville, it was a blessed enhancement to my experience as I used it to decide between their oven roasts, wood grills, and fresh pastas. The wood-burning oven is more than essence, however – it crisps the flatbreads and pizzas to perfection, and provides a Tuscan mixed with Andalusian and Sicilian flavor to fresh seafood and meat.

There is a great selection. Starting with appetizers, I eyed the raw oysters on the half shell usually only found at restaurants on the coast, but my taste buds wavered between the Seared Beef Carpaccio “Harry’s Bar Style” which came with a spicy mustard aioli and the Bruschetta with shaved pork loin, arugula, and tomato chutney.

My server recommended the Arugula salad with shaved mushrooms, fennel, crispy bacon, and “Belle Chevre” goat cheese, with spicy mustard vinaigrette, although the Mezza Luna salad with cumin carrots, feta, cucumbers, cherry tomatoes, and roasted shallot vinaigrette was equally intriguing, as I enjoy a good salad!

On to the *piatto forte*. I chose the Triggerfish, as I wanted to try something a little different. Cooked to perfection in the Mezza Luna’s large brick oven, it was served with a delightful lemon butter sauce that played perfectly with the thick, white fish to give it exceptional flavor.

The Mezza Luna has a full bar and an impressive wine list to whet the palate of any wine connoisseur. The Mezza Luna experience successfully mixes traditional Italian cuisine with Huntsville’s famous Southern inspiration.

Located at 2724 Carl T. Jones at Valley Bend in Southeast Huntsville, the Mezza Luna hours are Tuesday through Thursday for lunch through dinner 11 a.m. until 10 p.m.; Friday and Saturday until 11 p.m.; and for Sunday Brunch 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. ■