

If you knew Suze like we knew Suze

From martinis to ravioli

Luciano's
515 Yates St.

by Lena Ross

Suffice it to say, fans of Suze Martini Bar and Lounge, the eclectic and trendy hot-spot on Yates St., will be crying into their empty glasses as they return this semester to learn that the popular restaurant closed its doors forever at the end of June.

Proprietors Dano Lee and his wife Holly, who also own The Tapa Bar in Trounce Alley, purchased Suze and joined with the former chef of Small City Bistro to create a menu and a setting for Luciano's, billed as an authentic Italian restaurant and lounge.

Like so many other students on a tight budget who enjoy a good meal at a decent price in a location other than the run-of-the-mill Moxie's, Earl's or Milestones, my friends and I loved Suze, which we considered one of Victoria's truly one-of-a-kind restaurants.

For us, Suze was an eating and drinking establishment that boasted tantalizing yet affordable Asian-fusion cuisine, an extensive martini menu (each amusingly named after

the insect its flavours were intended to evoke), and an atmosphere that was theatrical without pretension. It was a place we could go for a few drinks before heading to the clubs, or where we could take our parents for a well-priced, quality meal when they came to town.

But life does go on, so when Luciano's opened at the end of August, I decided to quit sobbing into my empty glass and check out the new place. Of course, as I had expected, I was disappointed as soon as I walked in. Where were the chairs hanging from the walls, the candlelight and dripping wax warming the darkness and—oh cruel fate!—where were the comfy couches?

As my friend and I were led into the restaurant and up the stairs towards what used to be an idiosyncratically homely lounge area with overstuffed velvet couches and low coffee tables, we exchanged tight-lipped expressions as we surveyed what now appeared at first glance to be a holding space for overflow customers.

The art on the walls was subdued and mundane, revealing very little of the personality of the restaurant, and seemingly chosen more to

match the colour scheme than invoke conversation.

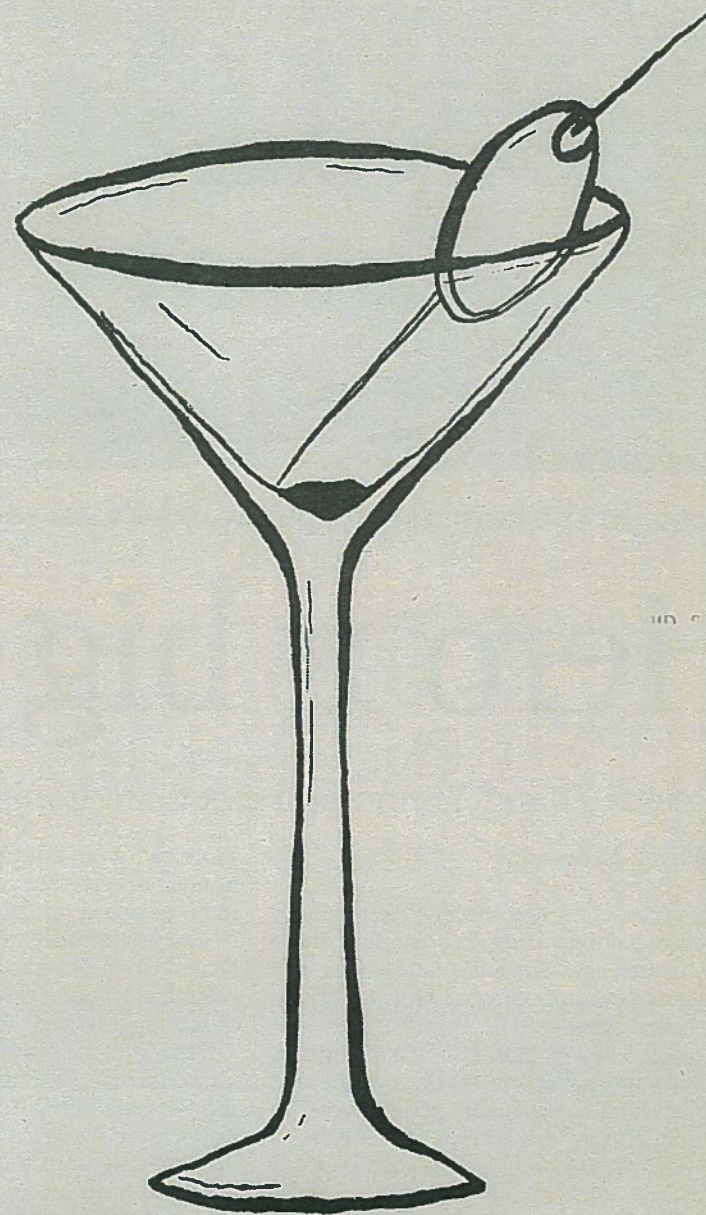
However, I have no hesitation saying that the food was absolutely delicious. The menu, while not overly extensive, had more than a few impressive options and seemed well thought-out. The food itself was perfectly prepared and arrived hot, quick, and with pleasant service.

Our appetizers and main courses were decently sized, elegantly presented and fairly priced (a main course of ravioli stuffed with butternut squash, mascarpone and ricotta in a brown butter with pumpkin seeds and sage that I ordered was \$16). Appetizers are all under \$10 and mains are all under \$20.

The drink menu was also impressive, with 16 martinis all priced at \$6.50, beer priced at \$4.50 and an extensive wine list. Oh, and they're licensed until 2 a.m. on weekends.

That said, Luciano's is not quite yet in the same league as other great Italian spots like Il Terrazzo. And it is certainly no Suze.

Perhaps some day my love of perfectly prepared squash-stuffed ravioli and pumpkin seeds will overcome my sense of loss.



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