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Chef for the stars is now cooking for you

KARIN JANICK

He has cooked for Cher, Jane Fonda, Bill and Hillary Clinton and Laura Bush. He was the personal chef for Tim and Nina Zagat, founders of the Zagat Survey restaurant guidebooks.

Now chef Luca Annunziata can cook for you.

Tucked away on the edge of Fort Mill, Passion8 Bistro is quickly becoming a restaurant of choice in the area. Luca is from Sorrento, Italy, and brings a world of knowledge to his artistry. He has worked in England, Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Aboard Cunard Cruise Line's World Cruise, Luca sailed to every continent and mastered traditional European cuisine.

In New York City, Luca prepared private luncheons for celebrity guests for Good Housekeeping magazine. He met his wife, Jessica, in New York and they eventually settled in the Steele Creek area, both working for The Westin Hotel.

The lure having their own restaurant led them to Fort Mill. The building they found has an auspicious history: Once a brothel, video poker parlor and most recently the A & K Diner. The Annunzias did all the remodeling work themselves, with help from relatives.

Much of the produce they select is grown locally, and the menu is an eclectic mix of soups, salads, pastas, specialty entrees and desserts. Pan-seared Chilean Sea Bass is a favorite. Sandwiches and wraps are offered at lunch as well. Even the water they serve is unique; pitchers full of blueberries, oranges, apples and more give an added fresh flavor.

The couple are passionate about the dining experience at their restaurant. Special events include wine dinners the first Wednesday of each month, half price martinis on Tuesdays from 6 to 8 p.m., live music every Wednesday and Saturday, cooking classes and in-house and off premise catering.

Beginning in mid-June, an award-winning dancer will also teach salsa lessons on the outside patio.

Passion8 Bistro is at 3415 S.C. 51 and is open 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Tuesday-Friday for lunch and 5-10 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday for dinner. Call 803-802-7455 or check out www.Passion8Bistro.com for details.