

THE INSIDE SCOOP

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Palo Alto got a new Italian restaurant last week. La Strada, at 335 University Ave. (near Florence Street). It's from partners Sal Giovannotto and Donato Scotti, who is also the chef. Giovannotto owns and is developing the building, which includes the 80-seat restaurant on the ground floor, and offices upstairs. The interior features dark mahogany, soft yellow on the walls and rust-colored sconces.

Many of the menu items reflect the chef's region, including baked salt cod Venetian-style with fennel seed flat bread (\$7.50); risotto with artichokes, sausage and smoked mozzarella (\$12.50); and ravioli filled with chicken and Parmesan cheese (\$11.50). Because Scotti plans to cure some meats in-house, the partners have acquired a 1930s-era non-electric slicer. It doesn't heat up the meat and it slices it paper thin. GM Michael Iglesias says this is particularly important with imported prosciutto, which gets oily when it's heated in the slicing process.

La Strada is open daily for lunch and dinner.

GraceAnn Walden is a Chronicle staff writer. Read her "Cook's Night Out" column each Sunday in the Pink section. E-mail her at gawalden@sfchronicle.com.