

UNLIKELY BUT CHOICE

NEW YORK IS THE sandwich capital of the world. New **Crestanello** rates above average marks where its unroutine Italian cafe fare is con-

to self-serve customers. Crestanello starts with its unique selection of imported coffees, espresso and cappuccino which, unlike Starbucks, are deliciously drinkable, and like the cafes of Italy, serves wine and beer. The flavor of the foods, whether hot or cold soups of a genuine character, inspired salads, pasta, or sandwiches on such breads as home made focaccia, some stuffed with chicken cutlet Italian-style, are not only good, but notably marked by their singular distinction.



Sheldon Landwehr

Crestanello also boasts a wide range of hot chocolate and rich desserts.

★★★1/2 *Crestanello Gran Cafe Italiano, 475 Fifth Av. (40-41 Sts.), NY. (212) 545-9996. B-L-D daily. Entrees \$7-\$13. CC: AE, DC, IGT, MC, TC V.*

IT'S FAR EAST FOR A cowboy bar, but rough and ready **Rodeo Bar/Grill**, is a large, active Southwestern joyn't, slapping down platters of Tex-Mex fare on rustic wood tables (on two levels), along with he-man drinks and live Americana music nightly.

If you hanker to make a meal of Cowboy Kisses (shrimp & jalapeno peppers wrapped in bacon), tangy BBQ ribs or chicken wings, crispy crab fritters, onion rings, sweet corn on the cob, and crab and avocado quesadillas, Rodeo is worth braving the crowd. Big fat cornmeal coated catfish is as good as I've had anywhere, but sides of black beans and rice are tepid. The 24 oz. Rodeo steak is tender, tasty,

succulent, served with smooth, tasty mashed potatoes and fresh salad.

There are good desserts too. Fat Elvis is a fried banana chimichanga with ice cream and chocolate sauce; pecan pie is gooey but crunchy, and only mildly sweetened; key lime pie is lip-puckeringly tart.

★★★ *Rodeo Bar/Grill, 375 Third Av., NY. (212) 683-6500. L-D daily. Entrees \$8.95-\$13.95. Accepts maj. cc.*

SCOOPS: Eva of NY's (7th Av.) hair colorist Magda, turns out heads that are stunning...For holiday break-fast call on Siegel's Kosher Deli (2nd Av.).

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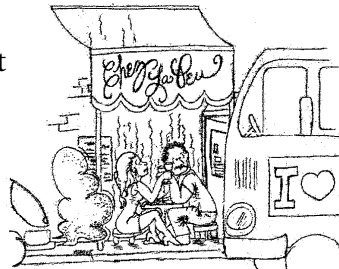
WHAT THE ★★★★★ MEAN
 0- Farkackt (Beneath contempt)
 1- Unremarkable but acceptable
 2- Good
 3- Very good
 4- Outstanding

FOR THE RECORD
 Restaurant reviews in this column are in no way paid advertising. Restaurants are selected at Landwehr's sole discretion and praised or panned accordingly. Feedback is welcome. Write Landwehr at 823 11th Ave. NY 10019 or call (212) 956-1882 or check-out his web site @www.SheldonLandwehr.com; Email Sheldon@Sheldonlandwehr.com.

Restaurant Report

cerned, as well as its engaging two level, modern-European surroundings, hosting granite floors, soft lighting, white wood trim, comfortable seating, wood tables and a well-stocked counter offering authentic specialties, and hefty sandwiches

Outdoor cafe's can be great, but you should try **Miss Elle's** Lovely & airy **Garden Atrium**



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