



Alba

BY CAROL MAYBACH

★★★★

2480 Canyon Blvd., Boulder

303-938-8800

www.albaboulder.com

THE DRAW

A Boulder favorite updates its name, location, and focus.

THE DRAWBACK

Some new dishes are too ambitious; risotto and gnocchi often have problems with texture.

DON'T MISS

Crispy polenta with grilled Anjou pear; crispy duck with soft polenta, seasonal vegetables, and kiln-dried cherry sauce

VEGETARIAN OPTIONS

Roasted red pepper-tomato soup, vegetarian pizzas, roasted golden beet salad

WHEN A RESTAURANT CLOSSES, it usually marks the end of a hard-fought run. But in the case of Boulder's Full Moon Grill, closing for a month served as a new beginning. When the longtime northern Italian favorite reopened in August, it was brandishing a new name (Alba), a new location (just north of McGuckin Hardware), and a tighter focus.

Open since 1992, Full Moon Grill's subterranean dining room, tight quarters, and viewless bar were in need of a face-lift. When



5280
Denver's Magazine

THAT'S AMORE Alba's popular crispy polenta with grilled Anjou pear.

owner Rick Stein learned that Full Moon's leased space was to be incorporated into a new supermarket, he had a choice to either close for good or move to another spot nearby—one that was spacious, brand-new, and had views of the Flatirons. It was a no-brainer—especially in light of competition from glossy Italian eateries such as Frasca Food and Wine, Radda Trattoria, and Laudisio.

Stein also took this opportunity to rename the restaurant. Full Moon's ambiguous name often confused diners (many walk-ins thought it was a Chinese restaurant), but Alba references the medieval city in Italy's Piedmont region known for its Nebbiolo grapes and rich gastronomic heritage. The new name clearly reflects the restaurant's refined focus, drawing diners interested in the culinary traditions of northern Italy.

Perhaps one of the most exciting upgrades

at Alba is Stein's commitment to building the best Piedmontese wine list in Boulder. With a strong emphasis on Barberas, Barbarescos, Nebbiolos, and Barolos, he is well on his way to achieving his goal.

In light of the changes, chef Greg Keesy also reworked parts of Alba's menu. He tightened combinations, incorporated authentic Piedmont ingredients (more truffles, balsamic vinegar, and polenta), and worked in Colorado product—thus capturing the focus on fresh ingredients that's inherent in Italian cuisine.

Take the linguine, for example. On the old menu this pasta often appeared with fresh Maine lobster, spicy artichoke, and sweet garlic—a confusing dish that had little to do with northern Italy. Now, however, the savory combination of forest mushrooms, duck confit, and Alba white truffle butter

