

## Spotlight on Restaurant

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photographed by JOHN FOWLER

# Café Rivera...

When you get right down to it, Café Rivera ending up in Greer is not such a stretch. After all, the owners were looking for a quaint place to have their own restaurant after living in the area and cooking for some of the finest restaurants in Greenville. Where they ended up is a comfortable, relaxed place where you can get a cup of coffee or a complete gourmet meal.

Bruce and Lucinda Rivera opened Café Rivera at 117 East Poinsett Street in downtown Greer in January 2008 and haven't looked back. Bruce Rivera has cooking in his blood. Son of a Puerto Rican Master Pastry Chef, Bruce was raised in Miami and started learning from his father 38 years ago. Early in their careers, Sam and Bruce worked at the Hyatt in Greenville. After many years there, Bruce left to go to Tampa and then Atlanta, but something about the Greenville area kept calling him back. He did several "tours of duty" at the Sophisticated Pallet before making the plunge to open his own restaurant, Café Rivera, in the West End in 1995. Two years later, he left to be an Executive Chef in Columbia, but again, Greenville kept calling. This time, his wife convinced him to relocate to Greer, and the rest was history.

"Some people think that our food is hot and spicy," says Lucinda. "However, it really is not. People might think that it is hot like Mexican food, but it is not. It is just full of flavor." They use cumin, garlic, paprika, thyme, and some red pepper to add flavor to their dishes. Lucinda describes the restaurant as a "Latin inspired steak house." "I'll put our rib eye up against anyone's," she says. "We age our own steaks, so we know when to serve them." Their skirt steak is second in



popularity to their rib eye because Bruce knows how to prepare it so that it will be tender. He also makes his own sauces, so you won't find these flavors anywhere else. You can choose between his herbed pesto, black pepper-onion-marmalade, or horseradish sauce to enhance the entrée. In addition to steak, Bruce also works with his fishmonger to see what is the freshest fish available that day and then he develops the specials around



that. Freshness is always the key. He prepares everything he serves from scratch except the Cuban bread, which is brought in from Tampa, Florida.

Café Rivera offers a variety of salads, sandwiches, and soups. Two customer favorites are the roasted pork, which is chunks of roasted fresh pork served on black beans and rice with sweet plantains, and the Cuban sandwich, loaded with ham, roast pork, Swiss cheese, mustard, and pickles, pressed on crispy Cuban bread. The dinner menu features 4 different steaks along with seafood, chicken, veal, and roasted duck.

The outside seating makes Café Rivera the perfect place to stop for lunch or dinner when the weather is nice. In addition to their delightful food, you can enjoy some of their Cuban or American coffee or a great glass of wine. Since Bruce is a Master Pastry Chef, their desserts are out of this world. The "Three Milks" chocolate cake, "Sam's New York Cheese Cake," and "Caramel Flan," are all delicious. They also do an occasional Sunday brunch, two of which will be on Easter and on Mother's Day.

Café Rivera not only has great food and a warm atmosphere, but their staff also has over 100 years of combined restaurant experience, so the service can't be beat. Let them show you how special Café Rivera is!

*Café Rivera is open Tuesday-Saturday from 11:30-2:30 for lunch and 5:30-9:30 for dinner.*



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