



**Continental divide:** Crystal Cafe chef and owner Klime Kovaceski updates classical, European dishes with a '90s flair.

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sweetbread and so I made it as a special one night. I don't get inspired by trends, though. I don't get excited about what's going on in *Gourmet* magazine. When I create a dish, I don't want to look back on it two years from now and have it mean nothing. I want my food to please customers—not impress them.

**JDP: What is your favorite meal at Crystal Cafe?**

**KK:** I spend a lot of time training my staff not to say we are known for one dish. I like everything on the menu. The reason I don't do black beans and cilantro is because I don't like that dish. Since my menu is so big, I created a top-ten list of my favorites: duck à l'orange, Wiener schnitzel, pork tenderloin, osso buco, rack of lamb, seafood risotto, sea bass, salmon, angel-hair pasta with grilled chicken, and beef stroganoff. I have fun with my menu—it's not like I'm building a nuclear weapon.

**JDP: Your osso buco is considered to be one of the best in South Florida.**

**KK:** My mother-in-law, who is French-Canadian, prepared that dish for me, but she used beef instead of veal. Essentially, it's the old-fashioned style of cooking whereby you start with the meat and then add vegetables. Most ethnic food was designed to be cooked overnight, and it would actually taste better the next day because the ingredients had integrated and become one—stuffed cabbage, beef stew and beef goulash are perfect examples. I have updated my mother-in-law's recipe by eliminating all the sauces and adding more vegetables. I simmer the veal with vegetables and herbs and leave it overnight. The next day, the vegetables are so reduced they serve as a base. Then I add a second layer of fresh vegetables, which are crisper and more substantial.

**JDP: What are the advantages to being a smaller restaurant?**

**KK:** I get to wear a lot of different hats—serving a few tables, greeting customers and then going back to the kitchen. I can really recognize people and spoil them. I can listen and react fast to comments and problems. Today, restaurants are becoming discotheques and steak houses are getting bigger and bigger. It doesn't worry me because people will always want to go to a small, warm, comfortable place where every request is accommodated. ☐